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New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Volodymyr Khandogiy, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Khandogiy (Ukraine): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the high post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. On behalf of my delegation, let me wish you, sir, every success in your important mission and assure you of our full support.

I would like to extend warm words of appreciation to your predecessor, Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, whose extensive diplomatic experience and skilful guidance throughout the sixty-first session greatly contributed to its success.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our support for the ambitious plans and consistent efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to re-energize the Organization, strengthen its capacity and update the United Nations system in the new century.

International terrorism remains one of the most serious threats facing humankind today. Last year the General Assembly, by adopting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, made a concrete contribution to combat terrorism in a coordinated manner at the national, regional and international levels. We believe that the adoption of a definition of terrorism during the current session would be a starting point in assessing counter-terrorism measures taken by each State.

My country joined the anti-terrorist coalition at its inception and has made a significant contribution to its activities. In the last five years, all 13 international counter-terrorism treaties have been ratified by the Ukrainian Parliament.

On the governmental level, we support international anti-terrorist efforts, in particular, through participation in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. This fall, we plan to organize in Ukraine the third international forum on measures to counteract acts of nuclear terrorism with the participation of civil society, scholars and non-governmental organizations.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are among the most important challenges on our agenda. As a country that voluntarily renounced its military nuclear arsenals, Ukraine is truly disappointed that a world without weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) remains a distant dream.

The international community continues to be intimidated by the threat of WMD proliferation. The strengthening of international legal norms and political instrument to prevent WMD proliferation remains a top priority. In this regard, I would like to stress the importance of the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the

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Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Commemorating in 2007 the tenth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Ukraine is ready to contribute to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) efforts on ensuring universal adherence to the CWC, particularly by Middle East countries.

With this in mind, Ukraine proposes to host next year, together with the OPCW, an international conference with the participation of, inter alia, countries from the Middle East and North Africa. The anticipated outcome of such a conference might be a joint statement of the intention of the countries concerned to adhere to the CWC.

We are convinced that the only way forward is to make simultaneous progress in the areas of both non-proliferation and disarmament.

We cannot but underscore our concerns over the recent tendencies that have already caused the erosion of the multilateral regime in the arms control and disarmament spheres with a negative impact on mutual trust and confidence among States. The very recent events around the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have seriously put into question the future of this important arms control instrument, widely recognized as the cornerstone of European security.

Speaking about global peace and security, I cannot but draw attention to the problem of the protracted conflicts in the GUAM Group area. These conflicts create instability and insecurity and constitute a threat to peace in the region. There is no doubt that these conflicts endanger the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region, while also hampering their economic and social development.

We are concerned that numerous international efforts to settle those conflicts have yielded no results. It is crucially important that the world community continue taking practical steps to that end. In our opinion, the United Nations, regional organizations and other relevant mechanisms should harmoniously complement one another, using their comparative advantages in peacemaking efforts.

In this context, I would like to stress Ukraine's unequivocal support for a lasting settlement in Kosovo. That objective cannot be achieved by undertaking unilateral steps nor by steps seeking to bypass the United Nations. A hasty settlement can only destabilize the situation in the region and have negative implications for the entire system of international relations, since similar scenarios could be pursued by separatist entities in other regions.

Ukraine has always supported United Nations peacekeeping efforts, both politically and practically. We are glad to note that the recent noticeable increase in peacekeeping activities has taken place in accordance with the reform strategy of Peace Operations 2010. That is especially important in light of the ongoing and expected deployments in the future. In this context, Ukraine supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to strengthen the United Nations capacity to manage and sustain peace operations.

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that next year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations. In this regard, our delegation proposes to adopt, at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, a special declaration to commemorate this event.

United Nations credibility will always be measured by its ability to respond adequately to various threats in all regions of the world. No organization is better equipped to deal with those issues. The United Nations should lead multilateral efforts with a view to reaching solutions in the interest of all. But, to address them effectively, we need to take further steps in reforming and improving existing mechanisms of the United Nations in order to make this Organization more relevant in the twenty-first century.

Unfortunately, the process of reforming the Security Council, which is the key element within the process of renewing the United Nations, is still only an agenda item. We are of the view that the reform process can only benefit from new, creative approaches that will eventually bring about tangible results. In this regard, I would like, once again, to stress Ukraine's position that one of the necessary elements of Security Council reform should be the allocation of an additional non-permanent seat to the Group of Eastern European and other States, whose membership has more than doubled since 1991.

In today's world, adherence to sound economic, social and environmental policies and good governance are the key factors in achieving sustainable development. We share the view, expressed in a

number of statements during this session, that sustainable development is a global challenge. Ukraine believes that only through concerted efforts, using universal, multilateral mechanisms as well as regional and subregional forums, will those challenges be adequately addressed.

For Ukraine and other countries of the region, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has become an important element in achieving internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time, the forces of nature, complemented by reckless and irresponsible human behaviour can disrupt development plans, reshape continents and even wipe out whole countries from the world's map. Science has shown, on many occasions, that climate change, global warming and pollution may cause sudden and dramatic consequences if not addressed in timely, proper and effective ways. Ukraine is firmly committed to the international agreements in the area of climate change, including the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

This year, we marked the twenty-first anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe, the worst technological disaster ever faced by humankind. Chernobyl severely affected my country and the entire region. We call upon United Nations agencies and individual donors to continue to provide assistance to the affected States and to work together on the implementation of the relevant programmes in a spirit of cooperation.

Ukraine, as a 2007 coordinator of the Chernobyl Agenda, has proposed, together with the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation, the adoption at the sixty-second United Nations General Assembly session, of a new resolution on strengthening international cooperation to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. In this regard, we would welcome broad support for that initiative during this General Assembly session.

Ukraine is approaching the seventy-fifth anniversary of one of the most tragic pages in its history — the *Holodomor* — or Great Famine. The artificial famine of 1932-33, perpetrated by the Soviet totalitarian regime for the purpose of annihilating the rural population, the backbone of the Ukrainian nation, took the lives of millions of innocent people. For more than seven decades this horrific crime, which ranks among the worst catastrophes ever experienced by humankind, still awaits adequate international condemnation.

We sincerely hope that the United Nations, as a collective moral authority and effective instrument in safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, will raise its voice and denounce the horrendous disaster that was purposely inflicted on the Ukrainian population in the early 1930s. By doing so, due tribute will be paid to honour the memory of millions of our compatriots who were outrageously deprived of their lives. It is important to remember the past in order to learn from it and to avoid repeating crimes against humankind in the future.

A decision of the General Assembly to establish an international day of remembrance of victims of genocide would be a worthwhile and timely contribution to the attainment of that goal. Likewise, it could facilitate the effective implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as the world approaches the sixtieth anniversary of those instruments in 2008. We are confident that this event deserves the adoption of a special resolution.

In the context of human rights, Ukraine attaches great importance to the harmonious coexistence of civilizations, dialogue and cooperation among various cultures and peoples. In this regard, we support the Alliance of Civilizations established under the initiative of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, and we intend to join the Group of Friends of the Alliance in the near future.

The problems before us are daunting. We believe that the United Nations is the only Organization with the worldwide membership, global reach and universal legitimacy needed to address today's global threats and challenges, which no country can resolve on its own.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm Ukraine's readiness to continue making an active contribution to the further strengthening of our Organization.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Billie A. Miller, Senior Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): It is my pleasure to join with the preceding speakers in congratulating you on your election to preside over the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Barbados

delegation extends its appreciation to your predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her leadership of the sixty-first session and also takes the opportunity to offer its formal welcome to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Since its independence in 1966, Barbados has been actively participating in the formulation of international policy on a number of issues of universal concern and promoting the centrality of the United Nations in the global development debate. We are proud to have made our contribution to the critical negotiating processes on the development agenda. Much work, however, needs to be done.

Permit me to use this occasion to identify those outstanding areas to which Barbados accords outstanding importance and where we consider that urgent results-oriented action must be taken by the international community. I refer specifically to the effective and comprehensive implementation of the global partnership for development as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius International Strategy; the provision of stable, predictable and adequate financial resources for the implementation of development commitments; the creation of a more enabling international environment that would facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by a majority of developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable among them; the recognition by the international community of the importance of providing continued support for the needs of middle-income developing countries; the implementation of existing global agreements on climate change as well as the early adoption of an ambitious and comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement; the protection and sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea; the successful conclusion of the Doha round of trade negotiations, with development as a central component of its outcome; the promotion of international cooperation on tax matters; the need for United Nations reinforcement of its commitment to assist all Member States in their efforts to combat the problems associated with the trafficking in and trans-shipment of illegal drugs, as well as the consequent increase in violent crime; and, finally, the need for progress on Security Council reform and for sustained emphasis on revitalizing the Economic and Social Council.

The gap between promises and implementation continues to frustrate our achievement of the full range of internationally agreed development goals. The level of international cooperation and resources committed by development partners has been woefully inadequate. Small island developing States, for example, have had, to date, to assume the majority portion of the implementation burden of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, despite the fact that these goals were determined by the consensus of the entire international community. Similarly, the needs of middle-income developing countries were not adequately addressed through the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, and they continue to be deprived of the vital development support they require to complete the transition. Next year's Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development must seek to redress this situation.

There remain only eight years before we reach our target date of 2015 for the achievement of the MDGs. We must identify effective strategies to transform Member States' political commitment to the MDGs into results-oriented, concrete action. We must forge strategic partnerships, not only within and across national borders that encompass varying levels of development and economic prosperity, but also among the private sector, the public sector and civil society.

It can no longer be denied that climate change is an alarming phenomenon that requires focused attention and urgent and decisive global action by the international community. I warmly commend the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his initiative to convene the high-level event on climate change on 24 September. The presence of so large a number of heads of State and Government at that important session is a clear indication that the grave dimensions of the problem have been recognized and the need for bold political leadership fully understood.

If we continue to delay action, we will be judged harshly, and deservedly so, for callously placing the inheritance of future generations in greater jeopardy. For today, we may have choices; tomorrow, they will not.

Barbados is a small, low-lying island State, highly dependent on its coastal and marine environment for its economic activity. For its people, the stakes could not be higher. Climate change not only

represents the most serious challenge to our sustainable development, it also threatens our very survival. Prime Minister Arthur of Barbados said at the 24 September meeting that there exists no reason — scientific nor political — for delaying an immediate response to this global crisis.

Barbados and other members of the Caribbean Community have taken steps, at the national and regional levels, to develop and implement climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and plans, largely from our own resources. However, the most effective unilateral adaptation strategies will be futile in the absence of decisive global action to reduce harmful greenhouse gases emissions and to address climate change in a comprehensive manner. Our leaders have underscored the imperative of collective action to address climate change, with the United Nations at the centre of the search for lasting solutions to that problem. In December, our negotiators in Bali must seize this moment in time.

The international community has yet to complete the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, with an outcome that has development at its core. While trade liberalization can assist in that process, much more is required if sustainable economic development is to be achieved in the developing world. We firmly believe in a multilateral process, which will not only cater to the aspirations of the more developed countries, but will also address the needs of developing countries, especially those with small, vulnerable economies such as ours. I urge the international community to proceed with the multilateral trade negotiations with a view to reaching a successful and mutually beneficial outcome.

Barbados and the other countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are neither major suppliers of nor demand markets for illicit drugs. Yet, because of our geographical position and external factors that are largely beyond our control, we find ourselves affected by the illicit trafficking in drugs, small arms and light weapons and their constant companion, transnational organized crime. As small countries with limited resources and severe vulnerabilities, we depend on international cooperation to counter those threats. The presence of the Caribbean Regional Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Barbados, which served a total of 29 States and territories and provided significant technical assistance, was extremely important to the Caribbean region.

We are deeply concerned about the decision taken unilaterally in Vienna to close that Office, and we are not at all convinced that it will make our region safer from these very real threats. On the contrary, the studies published earlier this year by the UNODC and the World Bank, on drugs, crime and development in Central America and the Caribbean, clearly demonstrate the need for an enhanced international effort in the region. It is our sincere hope that this unfortunate decision will be reversed as a matter of urgency and that the United Nations will once again engage the Caribbean region, through the reopening of the Regional Office in Barbados.

The issue of reform of the Security Council has been under consideration by the General Assembly for several years. Member States have expressed their views, and group positions have been formulated, but firm decisions have eluded us. It is now time for political compromise in the negotiation of an acceptable solution. Barbados will continue to participate actively in this process.

Gender equity and the empowerment of women are critical to development at both the national and international levels. There is a need to improve the way in which gender is treated within the context of the United Nations. It is crucial that the proposal to establish a new gender architecture be further discussed at the intergovernmental level and that all concerns be addressed and taken into consideration before a final decision is made. Any new structure must give due prominence not only to normative and advocacy issues, but also to issues of development, operational activities and adequate resources.

The deepening of the regional integration process is critical to the ability of CARICOM countries to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by changes in the global community. Having established the Single Market in 2006, our efforts are now focused on mechanisms to bring the Single Economy into effect through a process of phased implementation. The Single Economy will facilitate further integration of our production and financial sectors, the coordination of our economic sectoral policies, the convergence of macroeconomic policies, the building of a regional capital market and the harmonization of monetary and fiscal policies.

Functional cooperation has been a central theme of the Caribbean Community since its inception. We believe that, as small nations with so much in common, our best means of advancement lies in sharing our resources, experience and expertise to address mutual concerns. Health, education and, more recently, security are our foremost areas of resource pooling and research. Our region has the distinction of being one of the first to have eradicated polio and smallpox. A fortnight ago, the region convened its first summit to specifically address chronic non-communicable diseases, which have become the major causes of morbidity and mortality.

A stable, peaceful and prosperous Haiti is essential for the effective functioning of the Caribbean Community to which it belongs. There is a continuing urgent need for substantial support from the international community to assist Haiti in consolidating and strengthening the commendable progress that it has made to date. A prime requirement is the further extension by the Security Council of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to include a focus on peacebuilding, judicial reform, institutional support for the provision of basic services, and border management. We must directly address the humanitarian and socio-economic needs of Haiti if the majority of the population is to be lifted out of poverty and if the underlying preconditions for threats to peace and security in the country are to be removed.

This year, many countries around the world, including Barbados, commemorated the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The horrors of the slave trade — particularly the notorious middle passage — were of such huge scale and intensity that it can truly be considered one of the earliest crimes against humanity. That experience must never be repeated.

To bring closure to the criminal activity that was racial slavery, we also need to bring equity to the emancipation process. Addressing the controversial issue of reparations is essential to the attainment of those objectives. This is not the first time that a discussion on reparations has taken place and that decisions have been made. During the nineteenth century, Europeans accepted and enforced multiple forms of reparations.

Delivering the Wilberforce Lecture in the United Kingdom earlier this year, Prime Minister Arthur proposed the establishment of a William Wilberforce educational fund. Barbados encourages all those countries that participated in and benefited from this iniquitous practice to support that important initiative. In so doing, they will be paying tribute to the courage and the moral convictions of all those who campaigned tirelessly for the end of the slave trade and of slavery, and at the same time they will be supporting the continuous evolutionary experiment in human relations represented by the ethnic pluralism of Caribbean societies.

In international affairs, a multilateral approach is the best means for countries to fully and effectively address the world's most pressing problems. It is our collective responsibility to make sure that this Organization, the epicentre of multilateralism, is reformed and revitalized to make it more accountable — a transparent and effective instrument in the service of the development efforts of all its Members.

Development is the key to sustainable international peace and security. In our quest to guarantee the primacy of development on the global agenda, we must make certain that the United Nations is sufficiently well funded to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable among us, to support the aspirations of middle-income developing countries and to facilitate the transition to developed-country status of those who are poised to make that transition. The disproportionate allocation of regular budget resources away from the development agenda must be reversed without further delay.

There can no longer be a deficit in the world's development performance. We must all demonstrate the political will necessary to ensure that. It is a task from which we are not at liberty to abstain.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): Each opportunity to speak from this rostrum is a humbling experience, because I know that all the countries of the world listen to one another and try to discern and understand where our common approaches and interests lie. Those of us who represent small countries have a sense that this forum is a place where large nations address the ills of the world and that we smaller ones ought to stick to issues and topics that are specific to us and to our regions, as if addressing overarching, global issues

were pretentious and best left to those with the power to do something about them.

Today marks my tenth year here, and I risk breaking the rule. This year, as financial calamities have compounded political and natural disasters, it has become very clear that, although our common problems and challenges threaten us all equally, they affect us unevenly. The small nations, which have less of everything — diversity, resources, manoeuvrability, means and options — are at greater peril and have greater susceptibility than those with bigger territories, larger populations and greater potential.

At the same time, the issues on the agenda of the General Assembly — such as peace and security, economic growth, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, drugs, crime and international terrorism — know no borders, and none of us can address them individually if we want to see effective solutions. Finding solutions to these problems is in our common interest, for they are issues that affect all of humanity. And because these problems cannot be solved within our own borders, no one has either the right to abdicate responsibility for the consequences or the luxury of doing so.

When the speculative market drives the price of oil to $80, those who are too small to have significant reserves are the ones who are affected most, and large countries with large appetites for fuel sometimes make deals on energy matters that are not consistent with their policies. So do we, because energy security is not only a matter of global arithmetic; it is also a matter of life and death.

When climate change causes serious changes in the environment, it does not take much for a prolonged drought or an excessive rain to harm our agriculture and damage our economy or for rising sea levels to reach our cities. But we do not have the space or the diversity to cope and adapt.

When it is news that there have been no explosions in Iraq and when daily calamities are commonplace, we in the small countries begin to sense that we are vulnerable and susceptible to the will and the capacity of other members of the international community and, most important, to their tolerance of distant acts of violence and humiliation.

When development is dependent on the absence of bad weather, disease and war, and when the capacity to ward off at least two of those three ills lies in the hands of those who have the ability to bring peace and to heal, we in the small nations feel at risk and helpless.

When disarmament and arms control cease to be instruments for peace and security and instead become a means to reap political dividends, we in the small countries turn to our own means for self-protection. In other words, we become part of the problem, because the solution is not straightforward or visible.

Finally, when "Darfur" becomes shorthand for "helplessness", we in the small nations of the world realize that power has replaced responsibility. The ubiquitous language of human rights cannot and will not compensate for a lack of political will to act. Genocide must be prevented, not commemorated.

Generation after generation, we find new places for appalling human tolerance of inhuman machinations and names for places of slaughter, mass killings and massacres of those who belong to a particular sector, ethnic group, race or religion. For Armenia, it was, for 100 years, the desert of Der el Zor; for the next generation, it was Auschwitz; later, it was the killing fields of Cambodia; and, more recently, it was Rwanda. If each one of those names, together with the word "genocide", evokes ignorance, helplessness and the covering up of war crimes, "Darfur" today is synonymous with expediency, evasion and simple inconvenience. "Darfur" is synonymous with shame.

My appeal to the international community, on behalf of the small countries, is that it address each of these issues on its own merits and for its own sake, not as a piece of the global power puzzle. When tension rises between global Powers, it leads to polarization, and that in turn leads to a decrease in the capacity of small nations to carry out hard-earned policies of complementarity and balance. Our ability to be part of the process diminishes.

Let me state the obvious: we count on the willingness of the great Powers in the international community to set aside their disputes and to try to address these issues collectively. We also expect that they clearly understand that their power and influence do not make them immune from the consequences of the processes and problems that afflict us.

Last month, Armenia celebrated its sixteenth year of independence. During this period, we have weathered sea changes that have swept us up in regional and global processes that affect us in our daily lives. But we can only take pride in what we have accomplished during the same period: an open and diverse economy, high growth and strong financial systems, as well as improved elections, stronger public institutions and a population that is increasingly aware of its rights. All of that gives us the confidence and determination to address other ills facing our society — uneven growth, a high poverty rate, low pay — and to strengthen our human institutions and deepen our experience with democracy.

We have accomplished all of this under difficult circumstances. We still have a conflict to resolve with a neighbour; there are artificial limitations on Armenia's ability to act; and regional cooperation is lacking.

The agenda of the General Assembly this year includes an item on protracted conflicts. Lumping all those conflicts together is an inherently flawed approach. Our own conflict in Nagorny Karabakh does not belong there. The United Nations is not the place to address it, because that issue is being addressed within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Additionally, Karabakh is not a frozen conflict. We are negotiating with Azerbaijan and are inching towards a resolution.

Second, during this time, there has been an evolution of the process. We have a balanced, solid document in our hands that addresses not only the core issues but also consequential issues, and the two together add up to a reasonable solution.

Third, at the core of our process lies the right of peoples to self-determination. Indeed, the people of Karabakh do not want anything more than that which is theirs. They want to live in peace and security on their own territory. In other words, they would like to exercise the very right that every single nation in this Hall has exercised at some time in their history.

Speaking of conflict, we also follow very closely the events in Kosovo. We hear the international community loud and clear when it is said that Kosovo will not be a precedent for other conflicts. We are not attempting to make Kosovo a precedent for our conflict, because that contradicts our own principle that all conflicts are different. At the same time, however, we will not accept or understand the reverse logic, which holds that because Kosovo has been given independence, other peoples cannot achieve self-determination. No one should tell us that there is a quota for liberty and freedom.

At the end of the day, the willingness and understanding of small nations and their involvement in global processes cannot be a substitute for what major Powers with greater capacities and political will to act can do. In this age of openness and inclusion, there is no room for the old instruments of coercion and exclusion. Instead, we need new instruments of compromise and consensus so that we can achieve humanity's enduring goal of living in peace and prosperity.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I would like to assure you of my country's fullest cooperation in the discharge of the responsibilities bestowed upon you. I have no doubt that this Assembly will benefit from both your personal and professional experience. May I take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her invaluable contributions and wise leadership during the Assembly's previous session.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He is already fully engaged and has made an excellent beginning in the efforts to address global challenges since he took office a year ago. I would therefore, on this occasion, like to underline Ethiopia's firm commitment to cooperate in every way in assisting him in his demanding endeavours.

Just three weeks ago, Ethiopia began its third Millennium. This Assembly has recognized the Ethiopian Millennium as a world event. On 15 June 2007, it adopted resolution 61/270, designating the year from 12 September 2007 to 11 September 2008 as the year of the Ethiopian Millennium. The Assembly of the African Union also declared the Ethiopian Millennium as a part of African heritage and a unique occasion. We thank you all for that honour and for that expression of solidarity.

Those who have witnessed how Ethiopians of all walks of life have received the new Ethiopian Millennium could not have missed the new spirit that has been on display in the country. This is a spirit of renewal and commitment to stand in unity for a better future for the country. The new Millennium was greeted by all Ethiopians with a pledge to do more for national harmony and for durable peace and stability and to prevail against the poverty that has been the hallmark of the country in recent decades.

Two thousand years ago, Ethiopia was the home of one of the great civilizations of the world, at Aksum. A thousand years ago, we could still produce two of the world's greatest heritage sites. One is the city of Harar, the fourth holiest city of Islam, which by happy coincidence also celebrates its own millennium this year. The other is the city of churches built by Lalibela, a saint, priest and emperor in the town that still bears his name today.

But Ethiopia's fortune began to change, commencing in the second half of the last Millennium. Though a survivor of colonialism and a representative of the greatness of Africa's past, Ethiopia also unfortunately came to represent and symbolize the poverty, dearth and destitution of Africa's more recent history.

Despite the formidable challenges we have faced, all of this has begun to change in the last decade. Hopelessness and frustration growing out of a lack of confidence in the future is no longer an image reflecting the reality of Ethiopia. That is perhaps the explanation for the exuberance displayed by all sectors of Ethiopian society in welcoming the new Millennium. A new and strong national consensus is being created in Ethiopia today. It is a consensus around conviction and the resolve to make the opening of our third Millennium a symbol of Ethiopian renaissance.

That overwhelming optimism displayed by all Ethiopians at the opening of the new Millennium rests on a tangible foundation. The political, social and economic realities in Ethiopia have been changing over the past decade. We are making meaningful progress. Indeed, we have no shortage of detractors. These are non-Ethiopians determined to scuttle the progress we are making in all areas. Their attempts include efforts to undermine national unity and to micromanage Ethiopia's internal affairs. We have seen this, including over the past few days.

Despite all this, however, we continue to make progress. For five consecutive years now, our real gross domestic product growth rate has averaged over 10 per cent. Our per capita income growth has averaged nearly 8 per cent for the last seven years.

More tangible perhaps, in terms of the progress we have been making to change the life situation of our people, is the advance we have registered towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We are set to attain universal primary health care by 2010. We are well on the way to achieving the goals set for reducing child and maternal mortality well prior to 2015. We have made much progress in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. We have managed to halt and stabilize the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce the incidence of malaria.

What we have been able to achieve in the area of education has been quite remarkable as well. There is now little doubt that we are on our way to achieving universal primary education by 2015. Primary school enrolment at present is 91.6 per cent. Sixteen years ago, it stood at 19 per cent. We have also begun to ensure that the education available will, in fact, be quality education.

We have also committed ourselves to environmental sustainability in a tangible manner. Our New Ethiopian Millennium celebrations and the preparations leading to them have underlined practical expressions to this commitment. The slogan "Two Trees for 2000" has been enthusiastically taken up throughout the country. Popular enthusiasm has led to the acceleration of the process that began earlier, culminating, after just three or four months, in the opening of the New Millennium and the planting of close to a billion trees. This is a process that will continue throughout the year and beyond.

Nor are we oblivious to the spectre of global warming and the threat of climate change. Africa is exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of climate change: so many of us live on the margins that the smallest difference in climate can mean the difference between sufficient food and famine, survival and death. It is a global challenge that requires a global response.

However, the need for speedy economic development in countries such as Ethiopia, and in

Africa as a whole, should not be compromised simply in order to reverse dangerous climatic situations for whose creation we have no responsibility. It should, nonetheless, be possible, through effective international collaboration, to ensure that the developmental process in countries such as Ethiopia is environmentally friendly.

In this regard, we welcome the proposal of Brazil for a new United Nations conference on the environment and development to be held in 2012. We are also appreciative of the European Union's (EU) commitment to further cut its greenhouse gas emissions and to introduce more responsible and sustainable energy policies. We endorse the EU's support for reforming the institutional framework of United Nations environmental activities.

The economic and social progress Ethiopia has made over the past decade has, no doubt, been underpinned by the real and concrete advances we have made in building democratic institutions and fostering the rule of law. In this regard as well, we are entering our New Millennium with even greater and renewed commitment to deepening the democratic process in Ethiopia and strengthening a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding among our people. There is a new spirit of tolerance, dialogue and inclusiveness and of commitment to peace among our people.

The further democratization of the country and the nurturing of the rule of law is a pledge that every Ethiopian is making as we enter our New Millennium. This commitment is rooted in the conviction that durable peace in our country and the successful achievement of our objectives in the economic and social spheres can only be viable if we succeed in advancing towards achieving the democratic aspirations of our people. We urge those who wish to meddle in our affairs to remember that they will be held accountable for their action and that they should desist from seeking to place a trojan horse in our society.

It is that same spirit of the New Ethiopian Millennium that must guide our foreign policy. We have, over the last decade and a half, worked in good faith for peace in our region. We are more prepared now than ever and, in the spirit of the New Millennium, to contribute our share to achieving peace and understanding among peoples and countries, most particularly in our own subregion.

We are indeed fully aware that the basis for the renaissance of Ethiopia, to which we are committed in our New Millennium, cannot be limited to what we do in Ethiopia alone. To be true to the new spirit and to succeed in the rejuvenation of Ethiopia, we feel we have the obligation to stretch a hand of friendship to all of those, near and far, who see wisdom in a positive response to this gesture. We are well aware of the need for a regional atmosphere conducive to the rejuvenation of our region and of ourselves. It is not just the absence of conflict and dispute, but the reality of peace and cooperation, which is, we know, an absolute necessity. Without this we cannot achieve our aims, whether in Ethiopia, our region, or in Africa.

Allow me to express our profound appreciation to all those who have helped us make the progress we have made over the past decade. There are those who have been steadfast in their support for our endeavours and who have stood with us through thick and thin. We are indebted to them. Our obligation is to be true to the principles that underpin those expressions of solidarity.

Ethiopia, a founding Member of the United Nations, will continue to be devoted to multilateralism and the fullest cooperation with the United Nations. Therefore, as I conclude, I wish to reiterate, once again, our readiness to cooperate fully, and without reserve, with our Secretary-General in all areas where our contribution is needed and to seek friendship with all nations in the spirit of our New Millennium.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lam Akol Ajawin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ajawin (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure at the outset to convey to all those present the greetings and the best wishes of His Excellency Omar Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir, the President of the Republic of the Sudan, who, owing to unforeseen circumstances, could not take part in this important session.

It also gives me great pleasure to congratulate the President for his election as President of the United Nations General Assembly in its sixty-second session. I am confident that his rich experience and high professionalism will lead our deliberations to the expected successful results. I would also like to seize

this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Sheika Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for the commendable efforts she undertook during the previous session of the Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his election to lead this Organization. We have no doubt that he will contribute constructively to the revitalization of the United Nations role, preserving its Charter and the service it renders to Member States in a spirit of respect and transparency and that he will enable the United Nations to confront the current challenges at this critical juncture in the development of international relations, where the international community is faced with huge fateful challenges in many areas.

Last year, our President announced to the Assembly from this rostrum (see A/61/PV.11) that peace in our country is no longer a dream, but rather it is a living reality and an irrevocable strategic objective. Today, I am honoured to tell members that since then, we have resolutely continued to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to make it a reality.

All the constitutional institutions and organs necessary for implementation of the Agreement have been established. At the level of executive institutions, the presidency, the Government of National Unity, the Government of South Sudan and the state governments have all been established. In addition, the legislative institutions at the national level, in South Sudan and at the State level have been formed. At the judicial level, the National Judicial Service Commission and the Constitutional Court have been set up. Furthermore, all commissions provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement — such as the National Constitutional Review Commission, the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, the National Petroleum Commission, the National Civil Service Commission, the Commission to Protect the Rights of Non-Muslims in the Capital and the Technical Ad Hoc Border Committee — have been established and are all now diligently and conscientiously carrying out their mandates.

Under the timeline for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the National Electoral Commission and the Human Rights Commission will be established by the end of this year. The National Legislature will adopt relevant legislation following the resumption of its session this month. A number of unresolved issues are currently being discussed and negotiated by joint committees comprising representatives of the two partners and other members of the Government of National Unity. We hope that those issues will be resolved soon, particularly since both partners have declared their commitment to that end. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that peace and security prevail today in South Sudan and the other areas covered by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That fact in itself is the greatest achievement of the Agreement, since it forms the necessary groundwork for the implementation of other provisions.

While my country reaffirms its full commitment to the letter and the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and is determined to energetically and faithfully pursue its implementation, we also expect the international community to honour its pledges in fulfilling the requirements for peace — in particular the pledges made at the 2005 Oslo donor conference, the cancellation of all external debt and the lifting of unilateral economic sanctions and restrictions, which hamper reconstruction and development efforts and, indeed, defeat the very objectives of the Agreement — so that the country can manage the burden of reconstruction and development. Peace and security are two sides of the same coin: neither can exist without the other. Sudanese citizens are eagerly awaiting the peace dividends of reconstruction and development. We must not fail to meet that legitimate expectation.

The march towards peace resolutely continued with the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement at Abuja in May 2006 under the generous auspices of the African Union, which served as mediator. The Agreement was a huge step forward towards the achievement of peace, stability and development in Darfur through dialogue. That fact was acknowledged by the international community, which effectively contributed to the conclusion of the Agreement.

We have begun to implement various aspects of the Darfur Peace Agreement. In the area of power-sharing and participation, the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority has been established, and citizens of Darfur have been appointed to executive legislative positions at all levels of Government. All provisions of the Agreement related to power- and wealth-sharing and to security arrangements —

particularly the Ceasefire Commission — have also been put in place, in full cooperation with the partners.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, my country has always been fully committed to facilitating unhindered access to the flow of relief assistance for the affected and the needy. We have also facilitated the activities and movement of humanitarian organizations in Darfur. All those efforts culminated in the Joint Communiqué between the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations on Facilitation of Humanitarian Activities in Darfur, which we signed with the United Nations on 28 March 2007. The Communiqué is being implemented through a joint mechanism comprising the Government, the United Nations and national and international voluntary non-governmental organizations.

The humanitarian situation is clearly improving, as confirmed by health and humanitarian statistics showing lower levels of epidemics, hunger and food shortages, a situation better than in other parts of that area of Darfur. The return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their villages is another sign of improvement. The Secretary-General himself witnessed such movement during his most recent visit to the Sudan.

The joint efforts of the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations to maintain and consolidate peace have continued with the strengthening of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) through the light and heavy support packages adopted at the high-level meeting held in November 2006 in Addis Ababa, followed by the hybrid operation authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 1769 (2007). Our country has declared its full compliance with the letter and the spirit of that resolution.

The progress that has been made on the political, humanitarian and peacekeeping fronts could have been achieved only through dialogue led by the United Nations and other international actors — for which we had been calling for quite some time — not through the imposition of policies of pressure and coercion. Thus, it has been possible to arrive at an agreement acceptable to all parties. That has propelled the situation in Darfur into a good phase, thanks to efforts aimed at a peaceful settlement and the inclusion of groups that did not endorse the Darfur Peace Agreement.

My country is firmly convinced that the problem of Darfur must be resolved in a political manner, through negotiations. Therefore, we believe that high priority should be accorded to a political negotiation process. We reiterated that belief at the aforementioned high-level consultations held at Addis Ababa. Here, I wish to reaffirm my Government's full support for the joint African Union-United Nations initiative, led by Special Envoys Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim. In addition, we reiterate that we are fully prepared to engage in the peace talks scheduled to begin in Libya on 27 October 2007.

From this rostrum, we call on all rebel movements in Darfur to join in the march towards peace without delay and to immediately cease hostilities, in response to the repeated appeals of the Government of the Sudan. My Government has already declared a unilateral ceasefire, which will coincide with the 27 October peace talks. We hope and expect that the armed factions will reciprocate so that a permanent and verifiable ceasefire can be declared when the talks begin. Furthermore, we call on the international community to take firm measures against those who obstruct or refuse to participate in the peace talks. We also call upon those international actors who have hosted a number of the leaders of those factions to demonstrate that they are credible by persuading them to participate in the Libya talks. At the high-level consultations held on 21 September in New York, it was resolved that the talks would be final and conclusive.

Reconstruction and development are major factors for stability and for strengthening efforts towards a political settlement. We must therefore devote similar attention to the issues of development, rehabilitation and reconstruction, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1769 (2007). We look forward to the international community finalizing its current efforts towards holding an international conference on the reconstruction of Darfur; we hope it will take place soon.

In the twists and turns of the Darfur problem, my country has been the subject of unfair, hostile and ill-intentioned campaigns from some international quarters that are bent on exploiting the crisis in Darfur to serve their well-known interests, agendas and schemes. This vicious campaign has targeted our country's policies and political positions and seeks to exaggerate and distort the facts and to denigrate the

country's capabilities, its heritage and the values and traditions of its people. The campaign also aims at diverting attention from other regional and international crises. We hope that the international community will shoulder its responsibilities in the service of peace and stability in Darfur and seize the golden opportunity that will be provided by the expected peace talks in Libya.

My country, which has reaffirmed its full commitment to the objectives of peace and stability, culminating in concrete terms in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, will leave no stone unturned to spread peace, security and stability in Darfur. It will strive to consolidate its positive and constructive engagement with the United Nations. Clearly, there is no person or group of persons more concerned, or more determined to stop the bloodshed and achieve peace and stability in Darfur, than the Government of the Sudan.

We live in a world of continuous challenges and recurrent threats. There is no doubt that the international community is more than ever convinced that the only way to confront these challenges and their consequences is through collective efforts effectively and ably led by the United Nations. Such a role is reflected in the special attention the Organization has begun to pay to the challenge of climate change, as reflected in the statements made by heads of State or Government during the recent high-level event on climate change. Climate change and environmental degradation are major causes of conflict in many African countries, including my own, as noted in the recent comprehensive report of the United Nations Environment Programme, which highlighted the serious challenges the world faces as a result of climate change.

We must therefore consolidate our efforts and capacities in order to save our planet for present and future generations. We all recognize that climate change should be confronted within the framework of the requirements of sustainable development and its three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection. Sudan signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and ratified it in November 1993, thus committing itself to mutual cooperation with the global community to address the problem of climate change. A global consensus on a post-2012 agreement must be reached at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, to be held in Bali in December 2007. A successful outcome would be based on the Rio principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and would take fully into account the needs of the developing countries, especially the most vulnerable among them. In this context, the Sudan believes that developed countries must meet their commitments in the fields of development, capacity-building and financial and technical assistance to developing countries and must take the initiative to confront such problems in those countries.

The current international economic conditions and the commercial and financial scenario constrain development in developing countries, especially the least developed among them. This poses imminent dangers to the peoples of those countries, due to many factors. The most important of them are: the paucity of official development assistance (ODA); the unfair terms of international trade, which place restrictions on developing countries' exports to international markets and impose unfair prices on their primary commodities; heavy external debt; and the negative effects of the process of globalization.

The Millennium Summit reaffirmed Africa's special needs and made meeting them a priority. Hence, the United Nations should take the lead in reaching that objective. In this regard, we hope that the position of Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa will be strengthened and that the necessary resources will be allocated to that office to enable it to shoulder its responsibilities towards strengthening United Nations activities focused on Africa, in particular those pertaining to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and the consolidation of international cooperation to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The Sudan reiterates the importance of the Millennium Declaration and of reaching its goals, as well as the importance of other items on the international development agenda, with special emphasis on the right of developing countries to determine their priorities without restrictions, conditions or predetermined obligations that impede their development efforts, as described in the African-Caribbean-Pacific Summit that my country hosted last December.

In this respect, I would like to point out that my country has exerted tremendous efforts towards the realization of these objectives and has made noticeable progress in the difficult areas of poverty eradication, education, health care, maternal and child welfare and combating diseases.

The concept of human rights continues to attract the attention of the international community, not only because of the vital importance of the issue, but also because of attempts to deviate from the aim of discussing this issue with integrity and to exploit it in order to settle political scores. My country is of the view that a new approach based on dialogue and cooperation should be introduced when dealing with human rights, instead of naming and shaming, condemnation and threats of sanctions. Moreover, selectivity and double standards should not influence the consideration of human rights issues, especially at the Human Rights Council, which completed its first year with the adoption of an important document that lays the institutional foundation of the Council through, inter alia, ensuring the independence of rapporteurs in the fulfilment of their mandates and ensuring that human rights are monitored with neutrality. With the adoption of that important document, the Council has truly started the process of correcting the failures and shameful practices of the former Commission on Human Rights.

In fulfilment of its political commitments, and consistent with the attention it gives to all sectors of society, especially the most vulnerable ones, the Sudan was among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Women have been the focus of Government plans and strategies aiming at their advancement and empowerment in all fields, in compliance with the provisions of the Transitional Constitution and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. These efforts were crowned with the adoption of national strategies and plans pertaining to the advancement and empowerment of women in all fields.

As indicated earlier in relation to the declared objectives of the establishment of the Human Rights Council, in the light of experience with the former Commission on Human Rights, any effort to reform international institutions will be futile without the reform of the United Nations itself; any United Nations reform will be incomplete without the reform of the Security Council.

While we commend the efforts exerted thus far in deliberations pertaining to Security Council reform and the revitalization of the General Assembly, it is important to intensify efforts further in order to accomplish the desired objectives and understandings in this area. The Sudan reiterates its commitment to the African position, as provided for in the Ezulwini consensus and confirmed by subsequent African summit meetings. Africa is the only continent without permanent representation on the Security Council, although African issues constitute more than 70 per cent of the Council's agenda.

The fact that the Palestinian question remains unresolved since the establishment of the United Nations decades ago not only tarnishes the credibility of the Organization but also continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. It is imperative to conclude a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement of this conflict, especially in the light of continued violent confrontations between the Palestinian people and the Israeli occupying forces.

The international community should force Israel to comply with international resolutions and fulfil its commitments, including those set out in the Road Map, and enable the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and to establish its own independent State, with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It is also imperative to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on Israel's withdrawal from all the land it occupied in 1967. In this context, and to ensure sustained security and peace for all the peoples in the region, we wish to confirm the need to make the Middle East, without any exceptions, a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Developments in Iraq have further aggravated the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. The increasing pace of violence in Iraq and the deterioration of the security situation make it incumbent on all of us to cooperate and help the Iraqi people in their predicament. This can be achieved only through respect for the free will of the Iraqi people, the preservation of Iraq's unity and national sovereignty and setting a time frame for the exit of occupation forces from Iraq.

My country has repeatedly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Sudan supports all relevant regional and international decisions and

resolutions pertaining to terrorism and affirms its cooperation with the international community to implement these decisions. However, in order to eradicate terrorism, it is necessary to address its root causes and implement the integrated strategies that have been adopted.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that, in order for the United Nations to continue playing its role, we all have a collective responsibility, one based on a solid determination to make this Organization a platform for collective international efforts that would effectively and expeditiously address global challenges. We also need to coordinate with regional organizations within the framework of the United Nations Charter.

We look forward, therefore, to working together to strengthen multilateral cooperation for the common good, transcending narrow self-interest. My country, which this year celebrates the fifty-first anniversary of its joining the United Nations, hopes that this session's deliberations will represent a landmark in fulfilling those goals.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marco Haisiku, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Haisiku (Namibia): Sir, allow me to congratulate the President on his unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We are confident that he will discharge the high responsibility of his office with the wisdom, skill and experience for which he is renowned.

I also wish to commend Ambassador Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, who acquitted herself very well in the management of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

I equally wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for taking up challenging issues facing humanity with courage and determination.

The world needs a stronger United Nations and effective multilateralism that can help humanity to respond in a timely and effective way to global challenges. Namibia regards climate change as one of the urgent challenges facing humanity today. There is an overwhelming body of scientific evidence that points to the urgency and gravity of climate change. Climate change is a global issue with serious implications for economic growth, sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Climate change is a present-day reality that adversely affects the lives of many people. The international community has to live up to its commitment to provide resources to developing countries in order that they may adapt to the effects of climate change. By the same token, compulsory targets must be set for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Namibia is not happy with the rate at which investments are being made in the development of renewable and clean energy sources. I call upon the private sector to join hands with Governments to develop and apply technologies that can mitigate climate change. Sir, I assure you of Namibia's commitment to act in consort with other Member States to solve this problem through the establishment of concrete and ambitious goals to be implemented over an agreed period. All countries have a responsibility to act according to their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Namibia would like to see the process for the reform of the United Nations expedited. The importance of a stronger and effective United Nations, capable of delivering its mandate, cannot be overemphasized. This, among other things, would involve the revitalization and reaffirmation of the authority of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Namibia is pleased with the enhanced role of the Economic and Social Council. I believe that it is well positioned to shape the overall development agenda, to deal effectively with economic and social issues and to mobilize international efforts for the protection of the environment.

We believe that the Security Council should be made more democratic and transparent in its composition and working methods. All Member States, both big and small, should have a meaningful stake in it. Namibia appreciates the efforts of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session to move the reform process forward. The Security Council has great significance for Africa, since a major part of its agenda currently concerns peace and security issues on that continent. In 2006, for example, 42 out of a total

of 87 resolutions adopted by the Security Council dealt with Africa. However, Africa has only three non-permanent seats on the Council.

I wish to reiterate Namibia's strong support for the common African position as contained in the Ezulwini consensus and in the Sirte Declaration. The need for Africa to be equitably represented in the Council, with all the privileges associated with membership, remains a priority for us. The challenge in the immediate future would therefore be to begin a genuine intergovernmental negotiation process, based on the principle of justice and fairness for all.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed commitments stand central to global economic stability and prosperity. The highest priority should be our collective commitment to sustainable socioeconomic development on a global scale. I therefore wish to express my delegation's appreciation for the Millennium Development Goals Report 2007, which we find very useful as a summary of what has been achieved so far.

Namibia is concerned, however, that the results are slow and uneven. We wish to underline what is stated on page 4 of the report: "that the MDGs will be attained only if concerted additional action is taken immediately and sustained until 2015". All stakeholders need to fulfil, in their entirety, the commitments they made in the Millennium Declaration and their subsequent pronouncements. It is, therefore, important that Governments and institutions in the economically advanced countries offer genuine partnership by providing new and additional resources commensurate with the commitments made in line with the MDGs.

Namibia is classified as a lower middle-income country. It ranks number 126 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index, as it still bears the legacy of social and economic inequalities inherited from its colonial past. Inequality in the distribution of income and assets in Namibia is among the highest in the world. Nevertheless, Namibia has made progress in the provision of health, education and other critical services for the majority of the population, and we are on course to meet a number of the MDGs.

Indeed, we face severe difficulty in responding to a combination of the devastating HIV/AIDS pandemic, high levels of food insecurity and poverty at the household level. This situation is compounded by declining international aid to Namibia because of its classification as a lower middle-income country. I once again call upon the international community to increase its support to Namibia, including market access and access to financial sources, in the form of targeted official development assistance, concessional loans and investment flows.

Namibia applauds the Joint Communiqué agreed to by the United Nations Security Council and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council as a step in the right direction. There is a need for more structured and formalized cooperation between the two bodies on issues of peace and security in Africa. Such cooperation should also include the areas of financing, logistics, technology and training.

The right of peoples to self-determination is a fundamental human right that is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is sad that, seven years into the twenty-first century, colonialism is still with us, posing a serious challenge to this Organization and humanity at large. My delegation has raised its voice repeatedly in this Assembly by calling for the realization of the inalienable rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. The international community has an obligation to assist the people of Western Sahara in their quest for freedom and independence. Namibia, therefore, calls for the immediate and unconditional implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara, and all resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, with the aim of holding a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara.

Similarly, Namibia is deeply concerned about the continuous suffering of the people of Palestine under Israeli occupation. We wish to reaffirm our full and unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to return to their land. I reiterate our appeal to the parties to resume the peace process on the basis of international law and all the relevant United Nations resolutions. To this end, the United Nations has a responsibility to assist the process.

My delegation reiterates its call for an unconditional end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We believe that the blockade is not only against international law, but that it is also

politically unjustifiable and undemocratic. Its extraterritorial nature impedes free trade and economic development. We urge the Government of the United States of America to heed the call of the international community and to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly that call for an end to the blockade.

Let us commit ourselves, once again, during this session of the General Assembly, to address effectively the challenges we face, to save humanity from catastrophe and to make the earth a common place for all, where all will live in peace and security.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Lygia Kraag-Keteldijk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Mrs. Kraag-Keteldijk (Suriname): It is an honour for me to address this gathering today, and on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname I extend my congratulations to President Kerim for having been entrusted the task of leading the work of the General Assembly during this sixty-second session. We pledge our full support and cooperation as we collectively continue our work on the many challenges the world is faced with today.

Allow me to salute your predecessor, Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for guiding the ongoing process of reform of the United Nations and for her dedication and commitment to the strengthening of multilateralism.

To the newly appointed Secretary-General of the Organization, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, we pledge our support in furthering the ideals of the Charter towards sustainable development, international peace and security and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The current international scene predominantly speaks about the devastating effects of climate change, and also the recent findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have confirmed the warming of the climate system and have clearly linked it to human activities.

The effects of climate change will be felt in all parts of the world; however, the impact will be worse in small and vulnerable States. Suriname is a low-lying coastal country, and the majority of the population is concentrated in the coastal zone, where most economic activities, including fisheries, agriculture and industries, are located. A sea level rise would therefore be catastrophic for our country.

Taking into consideration the national interest in exploiting natural resources, it is imperative for a country to find a sound balance between economic development and preservation of the environment. Therefore, the Government has declared a substantial part of our land area as a nature-preserve area, including the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, which has been designated as a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Since the majority of our land surface is covered by tropical rainforest, Suriname contributes significantly to counterbalancing the effects of global warming.

A global threat, however, justifies global action, and the responsibility to provide an adequate answer lies with all of us. We call on the international community and development partners to increase their efforts and to continue their technical and financial support to developing countries to safeguard the world environment for current and future generations.

The Government of Suriname remains committed to realizing by 2015 the targets set forth in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This commitment is expressed in our policy documents. Not only do we accept the challenge to achieve the MDGs, but also a commitment towards our people to realize sustainable economic and social development in every part of the country, including the remote areas in the interior, which are populated mainly by indigenous peoples and maroons.

The Republic of Suriname places great importance on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of indigenous peoples. With the historic adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recently, Suriname has joined the international community in giving recognition to the rights of indigenous peoples. I wish to note that in recognition of the status of indigenous peoples as natives, the Republic of Suriname has recently declared 9 August, International Day of the World's Indigenous People, as a national holiday.

Surinamese society, which is multi-ethnic, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious, attaches great importance to tolerance and mutual respect. I therefore commend the High-Level Dialogue on

Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, which will start tomorrow.

I would like to recall that the slave trade and slavery were among the worst violations of human rights in human history, particularly given their scale and duration. We call on the international community to continue supporting the initiative of the Caribbean Community to honour the memory of all those who suffered as a result of the slave trade and slavery.

The United Nations is the supreme institution to advance multilateral diplomacy. Suriname will continue to advocate for the strengthening and updating of the multilateral system, in order to adequately address global issues in the areas of the environment, energy, water, peace and security.

Suriname adheres to the rules of international law. In this context the Government of Suriname respects the award of the arbitral tribunal, which was constituted to establish a maritime boundary between Suriname and Guyana, pursuant to Annex VII of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The award, which includes a finding of jurisdiction to consider the parties' maritime delimitation claims, establishes a single maritime boundary between Guyana and Suriname that differs from the boundaries claimed by each of the parties. Suriname is pleased that the rules of international law have brought an end to a longstanding dispute.

In closing, I reiterate my country's commitment to achieving the objectives of the United Nations, upholding the Charter and the rules of international law, and contributing towards a genuine global partnership.

The President returned to the Chair.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): I would like to add my voice to those of previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on the occasion of your election to the noble post of President of the General Assembly. I am confident that you will carry forward the able legacy left by your predecessor, Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa. Our warm tribute also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as he strives to reinvigorate our Organization.

We all have the great belief that in the twenty-first century the United Nations will be a more effective Organization. The continued relevance of this Organization will, to a large extent, depend on our ability to attune it to our concerns and make it responsive to our needs.

The United Nations must continue to serve the interests of all its Members States, regardless of whether they are big or small. Our approach to problems that transcend national boundaries should be based on a global consensus, while maintaining the key role of the United Nations in the cooperative management of these problems. We need to advance further and harmonize diverging views on the reform of the Security Council. The Council should be transformed into a democratic and respectful organ, reflecting its universal character, corresponding to present-day realities, and taking into consideration the need for balanced geographic representation in its membership.

The reform package should strengthen the General Assembly as the policy-making organ of the United Nations. It is only through reinforcement of the Assembly's role and mandate that we can successfully tackle some of the most pressing issues facing humanity, not least the process of globalization.

This year, 2007, marks the fifteenth anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership in the United Nations. I will use this apt occasion both for reflecting on our experience and for looking ahead. The development of our region is inextricably linked to energy security issues. We in Azerbaijan have been working for more than 10 years on our energy security. When we started our energy projects, the development of oil and gas fields and construction of pipelines, we could not imagine that our energy resources would be so crucial in supporting the causes of free competition and free market. But it so happens that we are right on time and ready to provide an important contribution to global energy security.

Our firm dedication to the policy of economic, political and social reform allowed us to improve our economic performance significantly. Last year, we had a 34 per cent growth in gross domestic product (GDP), and more than 35 per cent this year. In four years, the State budget increased more than fourfold. We managed to decrease unemployment and poverty significantly. A 36.8 per cent increase in the

population's income and savings in financial institutions is a direct indication of the improvement in livelihood.

Investments continue to play a catalytic role in the overall development of the country. In 2007, the level of investments from all financial sources has reached a growth of 10.6 per cent. Most important, as compared to previous years, the share of domestic investments currently accounts for a significant increase of 50.8 per cent, and a large part of it goes to the non-oil sector. These are very important steps towards achieving our goal of a diversified economy.

We believe that the sustainability of growth and development in Azerbaijan not only is ensured by the availability of natural resources but also attests to the commitment and capacity of the Government to protect the rights of investors and to implement its commitments under various contracts in the multibillion range.

Transparency and efficiency in oil revenue management constitutes an important part of the Government's efforts to improve public service and accountability. Thus, it gives me great pleasure to inform delegates that the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan, which leads the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in Azerbaijan, won the prestigious 2007 United Nations Public Service Award in the category of improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the public service. We believe that this success shows the efficiency of our Initiative, and we invite United Nations Member States to discuss the achievements made under the EITI. We plan to introduce a draft resolution on this subject during the current session.

Using our geographical location and unique transportation possibilities, we are pioneering projects on bridging Europe and Asia. Countries to the east of the Caspian Sea have expressed a vivid interest in these projects, and the role of Azerbaijan in regional affairs has become more important and has been transformed into a stabilization factor.

By dint of its political and historical background, Azerbaijan became home to various cultures and religions. Building on this rich experience, during its chairmanship of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Ministerial Council, our country provided substantial input to enhancing dialogue and broadening mutual understanding among nations, cultures and religions. We believe that by spreading knowledge about Islam and its values, cultural dialogue between the civilizations will contribute to mutual understanding and trust. In this regard, the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations provides a good opportunity for joint action and partnership.

Azerbaijan currently holds the rotating chairmanship of the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) group. Our priority is to espouse GUAM geopolitical and geo-economic advantages, utilize its role as a natural corridor bridging Europe and Asia and promote the development of civil societies and the economic cooperation of GUAM Member States.

At the same time, GUAM serves as an effective instrument to increase the international community's awareness about risks and challenges that its Member States have been facing. In this regard, I would like refer to agenda item 16 of the current session relating to the protracted conflicts in the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova. These conflicts have almost the same origin, similarly-developed scenario and dangerous outcome. They all started from the manifestation of aggressive separatism, were accompanied by ethnic cleansing against civilians and resulted in the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of these States.

GUAM is firmly convinced that the settlement of these protracted conflicts must be based on territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders. Together with GUAM colleagues, Azerbaijan will defend this fundamental principle of international law, initiate formal discussions in the General Assembly and mobilize support of the United Nations Member States.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorny Karabakh conflict remains the most serious challenge to the security of our region. As a result of the conflict, we are still facing the continued occupation by Armenia of a significant part, almost 20 per cent, of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. We are hosting approximately one million refugees and internally displaced persons, who were notoriously ethnically cleansed and brutally expelled from their homes of origin in Armenia and in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's position on conflict settlement is fully based on the norms and principles of international

law, plus four relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council that provide for the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the establishment of vast opportunities for the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

Negotiations on conflict resolution, which since 1992 have been carried out within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, have so far not yielded any results. The more time passes, the more difficult it is for us to observe from our side of the line of contact the attempts of the current Armenian leadership to consolidate the results of the occupation of our territories, their attempts to destroy everything associated with the Azerbaijani legacy in these territories and to carry out illegal activities thereon. The United Nations shall not tolerate such action. From this high podium, I would like to address the Armenian nation in order that they recognize that their policy of breaching peace and stability in the region has very dangerous, counter-productive and disastrous implications for the long-term perspective of development, above all, for Armenia. I am confident that Azerbaijan will restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is only a question of time.

Finally, on this issue, I would like to express our gratitude to Member States for their unequivocal support extended in September 2006 to General Assembly resolution 60/285, entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan". Although Armenia dissociated itself from the resolution after joining the consensus on it, we still believe that establishing the proper conditions for the environmental operation may become a significant confidence-building measure.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the efficient functioning of the Council. It is our common task and responsibility to ensure that this institution lives up to the expectations vested in it and becomes a truly objective, vigorous and credible universal human rights body. We are looking forward to finalizing the institution-building of the Council so that it becomes fully operational and devotes attention to the issues directly within its mandate.

In the course of the last two years, the United Nations has continued to represent a unique platform for international standard-setting in the field of human rights by adopting two major documents — namely, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Undoubtedly, adoption of those important instruments represents a significant step forward in a long historical process. Already a signatory to the first Convention, Azerbaijan is currently considering signing the latter.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Rosemary Banks, chairperson of the delegation of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): As we meet for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, we look again to the United Nations as the global forum to address the challenges which affect us all.

Climate change is serious and urgent, as many have said in this Hall. We welcome that it has been the theme of our general debate this year. The science is clear. Climate change is real and will impact on all parts of the world. To meet the global challenge of climate change, there must be widespread and effective international action. It will be important to get all economies onto low carbon pathways over time. Market mechanisms will have a significant role to play. Individual countries will face different challenges. Different national circumstances must be taken into account.

The United Nations climate change conference in Bali in December will be a fresh opportunity to re-energize our efforts in addressing climate change. New Zealand wants to see a Bali road map emerge in December to set us on the course for an effective future response. New Zealand welcomes the momentum that is being generated by other high-level meetings in the lead-up to Bali, including the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Declaration.

Last week's high-level event deserves special mention. We congratulate the Secretary-General for his efforts in cultivating the political goodwill that will be vital if we are to reach agreement in Bali.

Taking action as an international community also means taking action domestically. In recent weeks, New Zealand has announced a number of domestic measures to address climate change. An emissions trading scheme will be established from 1 January 2008 and will form the cornerstone of our efforts to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will, over time, cover all sectors and all gases.

We have also identified a number of longer-term domestic goals, which will move New Zealand down the path to carbon neutrality. They will provide benefits, including healthier homes, cleaner air and improved public transport. While climate change is certainly a challenge for us all, it is also an opportunity to move towards a more sustainable world.

With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, we recognize that having passed the halfway point to 2015, the international community needs to step up its efforts to achieve them. At the same time, there is scope for the United Nations development system to be strengthened. We welcome the newly established initiatives in the Economic and Social Council — the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum — as practical ways to share information about what is working and where we can improve our efforts at country level.

New Zealand is also committed to improving system-wide coherence at the United Nations in the fields of development, humanitarian issues and the environment. We attach particular importance to working for a strengthened, coherent, gender architecture and towards effective gender mainstreaming across all United Nations entities.

New Zealand welcomes the completion of the United Nations Pacific-based development agencies' strategic framework for the Pacific. We are keen to work closely with United Nations agencies in the Pacific to achieve positive outcomes for our partners in the areas of human rights, sexual and reproductive heath, HIV/AIDS, child immunization and women's leadership.

A strong, prosperous and stable Pacific is a key foreign policy priority for New Zealand. We place a high priority on fostering solidarity and cooperation in the Pacific to tackle the challenges the region faces in democracy, security and economic development. Around half of New Zealand's development assistance goes towards the Pacific.

New Zealand provides assistance in the region in Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, with each situation calling for a different response.

The Timorese people, their leaders and the international community have all made a huge effort over the past year to return Timor-Leste to a more secure and stable path. New Zealand has participated in those efforts through our contributions to the International Security Forces and to the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). Timor-Leste will require a sustained commitment from UNMIT.

The situation in Fiji continues to be of concern to New Zealand. As a neighbour of Fiji with a long-standing and very close relationship, New Zealand worked hard to avert last December's coup, including by convening a meeting to mediate between the then Prime Minister and the military commander. We very much regret that this failed to dissuade the coup makers from their illegal and unconstitutional path.

New Zealand strongly and actively supports the steps that have been taken by the Pacific Islands Forum to encourage an early return to constitutional government in Fiji. We would welcome a firm commitment from the interim administration to work towards elections within the timeframe endorsed by the Forum. Given that commitment, New Zealand would begin to restore a more normal bilateral relationship through which we could cooperate in addressing Fiji's undoubtedly complex problems.

I also want to take this opportunity to address one issue in particular raised in the Solomon Islands statement on Monday (see A/62/PV.13). It was suggested, inter alia, that the presence of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), was an "occupation", and that RAMSI's operation transgressed Article 52 of the United Nations Charter. New Zealand has always been committed to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter in every respect. In our view, RAMSI is entirely consistent with those purposes and principles. It is a specific example of Chapter VIII of the Charter in operation. To suggest it is contrary to the Charter is in our view wrong. RAMSI was established in response to a formal request from the Solomon Islands. Its presence in the Solomon Islands is sanctioned by treaty and by the domestic law of the Solomon Islands. That was recently reaffirmed by the Solomon Islands Parliament. Moreover, RAMSI stems from the endorsement by Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers of a programme of action under the Forum Leaders' Biketawa Declaration. That provides a framework for regional responses in times of crisis or

when members request assistance — exactly the situation in this case.

Amid all these challenges, I would like to report on activity being undertaken by Tokelau, the tiny territory 500 kilometres north of Samoa that New Zealand administers. The people of Tokelau, all 1,500 of them on three atolls, have decided that they wish to undertake an act of self-determination to decide whether they wish to change their present status. A vote in February 2006 narrowly missed the threshold set by Tokelau for a change of status. They will again vote on that issue from 20 to 24 October.

As members of the Special Committee on Decolonization know, New Zealand supports Tokelau's right to choose, but has stood back from any wish to determine the direction of any change. That decision is entirely for the people of Tokelau. New Zealand will support their decision.

Advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels is essential for the realization of sustained economic growth, development and human rights. New Zealand encourages members to provide their full support to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by acceding to the Rome Statute of the ICC. We also call on all United Nations Member States, especially State parties to the Rome Stature, to fully cooperate with the Court in carrying out its current work. Universality and full support are crucial if we are to end the impunity of the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international concern, such as those carried out in Darfur, where International Criminal Court arrest warrants are outstanding.

Efforts to protect and maintain the international rule of law can only be effective when built on a foundation of international peace and security.

Interfaith and intercultural dialogue can help to counter religious extremism by encouraging understanding and respect among different faith communities and cultures.

In May, New Zealand hosted two significant gatherings aimed at advancing global response to interfaith and intercultural issues in a practical way. We regard the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations as the key multilateral process among the growing number of international and regional initiatives in this area.

With respect to nuclear proliferation, New Zealand welcomes the strong signals that have been sent to North Korea and Iran by the Security Council.

On a different topic, New Zealand is convinced that the humanitarian harm posed by cluster munitions must be addressed urgently. We believe that negotiation of a treaty to deal with the problems caused by cluster mines is well overdue. We will host a meeting on this initiative in February of next year.

We are pleased, too, to promote a new initiative at the General Assembly this year calling for action to lower the operational status of nuclear weapons. Maintaining nuclear weapons at a high level of readiness increases the likelihood of these weapons being used, with catastrophic consequences.

The humanitarian disaster and conflict in Darfur threaten security in the entire East African region. New Zealand applauds the efforts by Members to establish the new African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

New Zealand is deeply concerned at the current political, economic and humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. We welcome the efforts being made to find acceptable solutions to the problems Zimbabwe faces. We sincerely hope that these efforts continue and that solutions can be found that will benefit all Zimbabweans and will enable free and fair elections to be held.

New Zealand remains profoundly concerned at the situation in Myanmar. Protestors have been killed, shot at, beaten and arrested. This violent treatment is reprehensible. Engaging in peaceful protests is a fundamental human right. New Zealand, therefore, joins others in calling for the immediate release of those detained in recent weeks, along with the many political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, who have been held without trial for much longer periods.

The Myanmar regime should be held responsible for the personal safety and treatment of all the people it has detained. We call on the authorities there to stop the violence and to encourage a process of genuine dialogue with pro-democracy leaders and ethnic minorities.

New Zealand fully supports United Nations efforts to resolve the immediate and longer term situation in Myanmar. We welcomed the visit to Myanmar of Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari. We fully

support continued discussion of the situation of Myanmar in the Security Council with a view to considering what further steps might be taken by the international community.

Turning now to human rights, New Zealand will stand for election to the Human Rights Council for 2009 to 2012. We want to do our part to help this fledging United Nations organization achieve its full potential as the pre-eminent global human rights body.

A human rights issue of particular importance to New Zealand is the death penalty. Adoption of a resolution on a global moratorium on this inhumane form of punishment would represent a historic step towards global efforts to abolish the death penalty.

In closing, New Zealand has been a committed and active participant in the United Nations since its formation. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on Member States to deliver to the best of our abilities at the United Nations, recognizing the need for faster, more effective action, as well as for a more results-driven Organization that strives to have the highest standards of transparency and professional ethics. New Zealand whole-heartedly agrees.

We look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General, with you, Mr. President and with other Member States in all of our efforts to build a stronger United Nations for a better world.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov, chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to join in the sincere congratulations on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and wish you every success in this lofty office. I would also like to avail myself to this opportunity to express gratitude to your predecessor, Her Excellency Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her selfless and efficient work during the sixty-first session. We also join in the words of welcome addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

Tajikistan welcomes the continued reforms of the United Nations structure and enhancement of its activities aimed at strengthening peace and international security, furthering the promotion of human rights, expanding its humanitarian mission, placing the problem of climate change as an issue of top priority and addressing today's other challenges. We believe that further progress in dealing with these issues of global importance is dependent on joint, concerted and consistent actions of the entire international community.

Tajikistan attaches primary importance to the further strengthening of the disarmament process, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and activation of negotiations on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In cooperation with other Central Asian States, Tajikistan took a very active part in the drafting of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in Central Asia, which was signed on 8 September 2006 in Semipalatinsk, and in the adoption of the relevant General Assembly resolution (A/Res/61/88) last year.

It is common knowledge that international terrorism, transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking have become a serious obstacle on the road towards sustainable development, inflicting much suffering and causing trouble to humanity. The international community should intensify its efforts aimed at counteracting the commission of acts of terror and the proliferation of ideologies based on terrorism, extremism and separatism, interreligious and inter-ethnic intolerance and hostility, and should enhance its struggle against the financing of terrorism.

The global system of combating terrorism, which is currently taking shape, cannot be established without the involvement of regional and subregional organizations. In our region, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are serving this purpose.

We believe that long-term success in combating terrorism and religious extremism depends on eliminating the root causes of these negative phenomena associated with social and economic problems within society. It is essential to jointly search for ways of addressing poverty issues, overcoming negative consequences of globalization, and resolving internal and regional conflicts. Actions based on force alone will not be able to uproot terrorism.

Regrettably, today, we witness the merging of terrorism with transnational organized crime and the drug trade, which gives rise to our shared and justifiable concern. Prevention of illicit drug

trafficking, which, to a certain extent, is the breeding ground for terrorism and international crime, should become part and parcel of our common struggle against terrorism. In this regard, I would like to reiterate Tajikistan's willingness to continue constructive dialogue and cooperation with the aim of establishing an effective global partnership for counteracting the narcotics threat.

An international conference dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan was held in Dushanbe in June 2007, in cooperation with the United Nations. Almost simultaneously, the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding successfully concluded its activities. Moreover, for the first time, the citizens of my country joined international United Nations peacekeeping operations. These events provide convincing proof that the United Nations has the capacity to assist in reaching a peace and in ensuring further sustainable development in a country that has lived through serious internal conflict.

For Tajikistan, like for most United Nations Member States, the achievement of sustainable development is a high priority goal. Within the United Nations framework, much has been accomplished the world over in order to promote sustainable development and to alleviate poverty, epidemics, famine and illiteracy. Meanwhile, the implementation of a large-scale programme on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will require not only extra effort but also additional resources. Tajikistan's intention is to realize the greatest possible progress in the implementation of the MDGs. The main purpose of the National Strategy for Development of the Republic of Tajikistan up to the year 2015 and the Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Tajikistan for the years 2007-2009 is to ensure stable economic development and to provide a better standard of living for the country's population.

It is also obvious that the attainment of the MDGs, to a large extent, also depends on the attitude of the international community when it comes to rendering assistance to developing countries and on the timely mobilization of internal and external resources. With this in mind, Tajikistan joins the appeal addressed to the donor community to at least double the amount of assistance targeted for development. The proposal to pardon the debts incurred by developing countries in exchange for the implementation of national projects aimed at sustainable development remains equally important. In this connection, we attach much significance to the unification of efforts aimed at supporting sustainable financing for development, first and foremost, in the interests of attaining the MDGs. We are in favour of a joint search for effective and feasible development financing mechanisms. Partial writing off of debts could be equally important, since it would make it possible to invest liberated funds into education, environmental protection, combating HIV/AIDS and other MDGs.

Tajikistan wholeheartedly supports the creation of a mechanism of additional measures aimed at making further progress in the realization of the right to development, as enshrined in the Declaration on the Right to Development. Among the issues that should be regarded as associated with that right are the rational usage of natural resources for the purpose of development, provision for the well-being of the population and addressing the problems of poverty and unemployment.

In that connection, Tajikistan believes it has the right to develop the hydropower sector of the economy by building water reservoirs and dams on the major rivers of the country, because sustainable development, improved living standards of the population, achievement of the MDGs, the provision of reliable regulated irrigation water flows and an increased production of electrical energy depend on the availability of hydropower resources. Not only is the implementation of hydropower projects in Tajikistan extremely advantageous for the country itself, but it will also be able to influence favourably the sustainable development of the other States of the region. For instance, the completion of the construction of the Ragun hydropower station in Tajikistan alone will make it possible to supply an extra three million hectares of land with water in the neighbouring Central Asian states. Only an integrated approach towards the use of hydropower and other natural resources of the region, based on the principles of mutual understanding, assistance and trust among the States of the region, can ensure sustainable development in the region and promote a resolution of environmental problems, which are closely interconnected with the rational use of those resources.

Tajikistan is interested in getting support and establishing a partnership with countries and

international organizations in the field of renewable sources of energy and energy-efficient technologies, which help to reduce the usage of other traditional types of energy that negatively affect our climate and do enormous damage to the environment and to the future of humanity.

Tajikistan welcomes the High-Level Event on Climate Change held recently in New York and the forthcoming conference on the same subject to be held in Bali in December 2007.

Within the context of global warming, degradation of glaciers and the snow cover on the territories of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are the upper watershed zones of Central Asia's rivers, has become an ever increasing concern for the Central Asian region. According to various sources, over the last 10 years the area of glaciers in Tajikistan has decreased by 30 to 35 per cent. Although supplying the population with drinking water is being discussed at the top level, and the fact that numerous declarations and other international instruments have already been adopted on this issue, the situation remains urgent. The solution of the problem requires further coordinated efforts on behalf of countries and international organizations. This problem is not only addressed in the Millennium Development Goals, but it is also ranked among those challenges that the world community encounters on a daily basis.

For this reason, the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", proclaimed by the United Nations on the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan, is regarded as even more timely and appropriate. As part of the Decade, the Government of Tajikistan has planned an international conference for 2008 in Dushanbe on water-related natural disasters, to be held in cooperation with United Nations agencies and other international organizations. Tajikistan hopes that all United Nations Member States will participate actively in this conference.

From time immemorial the water originating in Tajikistan has quenched the thirst of all nations of Central Asia and has irrigated the dry steppes of the region. However, it is obvious that the region has already been experiencing water-related difficulties that can become more aggravated on a yearly basis. To address this urgent problem, Tajikistan proposes to provide the Central Asian States with environmentally sound freshwater from Lake Sarez, which is located at a height of almost 3,300 metres above sea level and which could provide freshwater to half the population of Central Asia. The implementation of this initiative would make it possible to eliminate the real threat of an overflow of Lake Sarez, which could affect millions of people who reside in the downstream areas in neighbouring countries.

As for the development of trade and economic cooperation with other countries, the major challenge that Tajikistan is facing in this area is lack of access to the sea and other transportation and communication difficulties. For this reason, Tajikistan is committed to the decisions and recommendations outlined in the Almaty Programme of Action for transit transport cooperation, which addresses the special needs of landlocked developing countries to efficiently use the available transport infrastructure and to increase transit capacity in order to encourage development of trade and the advancement of investments in Central Asia.

The rehabilitation process in Afghanistan is creating favourable conditions for cooperation in the region in the implementation of transportation and communication projects aimed at gaining access to southern sea ports. The creation of new multi-optional transport corridors and the restoration of the Great Silk Road routes seek to establish a unified interconnected system of communications and to provide the Central Asian States with reliable access to promising markets. The August opening of the bridge across the Pyandj River between Tajikistan and Afghanistan was among the practical measures taken to achieve that goal.

The magnitude of the challenges facing the international community requires the further strengthening of our Organization. There is no doubt that all of us must do our utmost to make the United Nations even more effective in addressing current issues. For that reason, we believe that all of us must shoulder our responsibilities towards the Organization, in the interests of all Member States.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Claude Heller, chairman of the delegation of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me to express to you, Sir, my delegation's warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We are convinced that you will be able to skilfully guide our efforts to attain the common objectives that we

have set for the session. I should also like to express Mexico's gratitude for the excellent work of your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa.

Likewise, I wish to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the work accomplished on major items on our agenda during the first months of his mandate. I also wish to congratulate him on the high-level event on climate change, held last week, which undoubtedly helped to raise awareness about an issue that deserves priority attention.

At a time when the international community is facing many challenges that test our capacity to fulfil the purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, it is essential to strengthen and make effective use of multilateral institutions. In that connection, the Organization must daily reaffirm itself as the indisputable centre for coexistence among States and the guarantor of compliance with international law. Mexico, as a founding Member of this pre-eminent universal forum, takes this opportunity to reaffirm its firm and decisive commitment to multilateralism.

We are living in a complex world situation characterized by armed conflicts of various sorts, including inter-ethnic conflicts that are not confined by borders; the commission of terrorist acts; the destabilizing activities of transnational organized crime; the proliferation of the arms race in all its aspects; and environmental degradation, situations of abject poverty, social exclusion and discrimination and pandemics affecting broad sectors of the world population. That is why, more than ever before, we need an Organization capable of meeting the needs of women and men throughout the world. In that context, we must think about the role of the United Nations.

Mexico sees three fundamental approaches for harmonizing relations among States and addressing the great challenges of our time: shared responsibility in the face of globalization, the promotion of human security for development and the responsibility to cooperate in the multilateral arena.

Every State is responsible, to its own society and to the international community, for guaranteeing the rule of law and the full enjoyment of human rights, promoting development, protecting the environment and countering new threats to security in order to provide the best possible living conditions for its people. The actions of the Government of Mexico at the internal level are based on those pillars so as to guarantee the rule of law throughout the national territory, given the onslaught of organized crime, and to reaffirm the authority of the State in the full exercise of its responsibilities.

The security of the population is not limited to the physical protection of individuals. That is why human security must be understood as a broad and integral concept that can meet the needs of society as a whole. It is a concept that includes elements ranging from strict respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms to adequate preparation of the population to deal with natural disasters or pandemics.

Mindful of the value of the individual, the Government of Mexico bases its activities on the quest for sustainable human development, which means seeking to promote the comprehensive development of individuals in all aspects — social, economic, political, cultural, human and environmental — and to do it in such a way as to ensure that future generations have opportunities to achieve well-being.

Within the framework of multilateral institutions, States have freely shouldered the obligation to cooperate with others in addressing all problems in areas such as, inter alia, combating drug trafficking and terrorism and preserving the environment, in which internal efforts alone are insufficient and concerted action is required.

Shared responsibility in the face of globalization, promoting human security for development and the responsibility to cooperate in the multilateral arena are among the main concerns of our Organization. A good example of this is climate change. As the Secretary-General himself has indicated, climate change is among the most serious, complex and multifaceted threats confronting the world. Mexico favours the multilateral climate change regime developed within the United Nations as an ideal framework for shaping commitments to be adopted in the near future. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol are the appropriate areas for negotiation.

Emerging and developing countries must consider the fact that the costs of inaction of passivity in the face of climate change will be to the detriment of their own development efforts. We in Mexico have understood this. The national development plan 2007-2012 includes actions related to environmental

sustainability, with two specific objectives: reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and promoting measures to adapt to the effects of climate change. The inaction of others must not be a pretext for failing to do our part. We are convinced that shared but differentiated responsibilities must motivate all countries to take action to the best of their abilities and that developed countries, without exception, must contribute substantially to the collective effort in the technological and financial sphere.

Mexico believes that we must break away from the limitations of the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, whereby the achievement of developed countries' goals depends on their geographical location. What we need are positive incentives to supplement, not replace, the national efforts of developing countries. It is urgent that such incentives reward the efforts of beneficiary countries that make such efforts in their own interests. Accordingly, those that do more should receive greater support.

In recent years, the international community has had to face a series of challenges in the fight against terrorism. One of those challenges has been to guarantee the maintenance of international peace and security in the face of terrorism's evil effects without renouncing the universal and absolute values of human rights. That is an essential condition for civilized coexistence within and beyond our borders.

The United Nations has determined, in a number of commitments, that measures adopted by States to combat terrorism and to protect their citizens and provide adequate security for them must respect obligations undertaken in accordance with international law, in particular human rights norms, the rights of refugees and international humanitarian law.

Promoting and protecting human rights is one of the highest priorities for the Government of Mexico. We, the international community, have the responsibility to ensure universal and indivisible respect for human rights for all, regardless of the circumstances. Today, the situation in Myanmar demands our attention.

The creation of the Human Rights Council and the adoption of the institutional reform package, which includes the establishment of a universal periodic review mechanism, have marked a watershed in building a more just and equitable international system for human rights. Double standards in this area can no longer exist. With objectivity and in a spirit of cooperation, we must promote the evaluation of human rights in all Member States without any distinction. That effort strengthens the essential role of the Organization in developing international norms to protect human rights and represents the most solid foundation for achieving the well-being of our peoples.

In that regard, we welcome the recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Mexico remains open to scrutiny by treaty bodies and to special procedures on human rights, which have played an essential role in identifying the challenges our country still faces.

Given the multidimensional nature of international migration, Mexico believes that our Organization is the most fitting forum for dealing with these problems, on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility and of strengthening cooperation among States directly affected by that phenomenon. The issue of migration can in no way be limited solely to its State security aspects. We must have a comprehensive understanding based on respect for the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their legal status, taking into account the economic, social and cultural implications of the phenomenon.

We say this from our own experience. Mexico is a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants. For that reason, in addition to recognizing our own responsibility domestically, we must adopt effective measures to strengthen the international framework for the protection of migrants. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is, without a doubt, a valuable reference point. While we recognize the need to cooperate in that area, Mexico is shouldering its own responsibility to create conditions so that our compatriots are able to find more and better opportunities within our country. That is why the Government of President Felipe Calderón is taking action on a number of fronts to promote public and private investment in order to develop programmes to create more jobs; to increase access to secondary and post-secondary education; to guarantee access to medical services, including in the most isolated and marginalized areas of the country; to ensure social security coverage; and to reduce inequality among our citizens.

It is clear that the success of our development policies requires a favourable international economic environment and cooperation among States. The United Nations is playing an essential role in providing technical assistance and monitoring the implementation of commitments undertaken by the international community at the major conferences, summits and forums sponsored by the Organization.

Seven years from the date set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, we note with concern that while significant progress has been achieved in some areas of the world, in other areas there are still delays and even steps backward. We recognize that each country is responsible for its own development. However, national efforts must be accompanied by international action based on the global alliance forged at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico. That will ensure complementarity between national strategies and the development of the world economy. Mexico hopes that the Economic and Social Council's new Development Cooperation Forum and the international review conference on the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha in 2008 will be steps in that direction.

International security requires renewed commitments. Although there has been a numerical reduction in nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war, it is disturbing to see the growing sophistication of related technology. Unfortunately, that points to a new phase in the arms race. Mexico is convinced that the only guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is a progressive reduction aimed at their complete elimination and the certainty that they will never be produced again. As one of the initial steps for achieving nuclear disarmament, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must enter into force as soon as possible. Mexico also believes that the vital strengthening of the non-proliferation regime requires the fulfilment of obligations undertaken by all States, nuclear and non-nuclear, under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), with a view to its universalization. If no progress is achieved on non-proliferation or disarmament, fear, mistrust and greater insecurity will prevail. In this regard, the NPT review conference to be held in 2010 is a new opportunity for safeguarding and strengthening these objectives.

We welcome the agreements recently reached with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are convinced that the ongoing controversy over nuclear matters in the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be resolved through diplomacy and strict compliance with commitments undertaken within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mexico supports the resolution of conflicts in various regions through dialogue, negotiations and full respect for international law. That is particularly true in dealing with the most critical items on the United Nations agenda.

We are following with particular attention recent developments on various aspects of the situation in the Middle East and their impact on international stability. We support efforts aimed at a new peace process between Israel and Palestine, convinced that a final solution can be achieved only through negotiation between the parties with the active support of the international community. We hope that in the very near future the State of Israel and a politically and economically viable Palestinian State can coexist within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

If multilateralism has returned, it is now up to States to show the political will necessary to promote concrete reform, ranging from adjusting the Security Council to meet the needs of our time to ensuring greater coherence in action to promote sustainable development. The response to the institutional crisis of recent years does not lie in alternative mechanisms or unilateral or partial approaches, but rather, we must give the Organization the necessary tools to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

Mexico believes that expanding the Security Council is an unavoidable necessity in order to make that body more representative. In this regard, my Government favours increasing the number of non-permanent members, with the possibility of being re-elected in order to promote accountability. We believe that any other formula will highlight existing inequalities.

Mexico is the tenth largest contributor to this Organization and a country loyal to the cause of the United Nations. We are committed to its reform and ready to shoulder greater responsibilities on the international scene. In line with this vision, Mexico has

submitted its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2009-2010 period.

The Government of Mexico has expressed its political will to constructively participate in the work of the Council in the areas of maintaining international peace and security and dealing with questions on the world agenda that are within the purview of the Council.

On this basis, Mexico reaffirms its determination to actively contribute to building a more secure, democratic and equitable international society.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Philip Sealy, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Sealy (Trinidad and Tobago): I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. My delegation is confident that your in-depth knowledge of international economic and political issues, complemented by your extensive diplomatic experience, will serve you in good stead to guide our deliberations effectively in the coming months.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express Trinidad and Tobago's deep appreciation for the leadership of your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, the first Arab woman to hold that lofty position. As President of the General Assembly, her efforts contributed to focusing the attention of the international community on the pressing challenges of climate change, inter alia, thereby facilitating, in the process, global awareness and increased support for internationally agreed action on this issue given its impact on our planet and, especially, on the very survival of several small island developing States.

I consider this occasion opportune, as well, to convey Trinidad and Tobago's unequivocal support for our current Secretary-General His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. We commend his leadership role in the troubling humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan and applaud his initiative to convene the High-Level Event on Climate Change. These are indeed apt demonstrations of his willingness to confront forcefully and resolutely issues of transcendental importance to the present and future well-being of peoples everywhere.

Though small in size and population, Trinidad and Tobago, through visionary leadership, transparency and public accountability and prudent management of our natural resources, is continuing along a path of sustainable development. Our development strategy seeks to go beyond the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to ensure that by the year 2020 all sectors of our multi-ethnic and multicultural society will enjoy a standard of living comparable to that of the developed world.

The performance of our economy draws its strength from vertically integrated and well-developed energy and petrochemical industries, which are complemented by buoyant and competitive manufacturing and service sectors, including financial services and tourism, as well as by the ongoing transformation of the agricultural sector. All these factors provide the basis for economic growth levels off 8.6 per cent over the last five years and a recorded rate of 12 per cent in 2006. We have also been able to achieve a 7 per cent reduction in poverty from a high of 24 per cent in 1998 and are currently experiencing a low unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent.

It is on the basis of this strong economic performance that Trinidad and Tobago has continued its commitment to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), as we seek to advance the integration process, moving from the current stage of the single market to that of a single economy. Effective participation in this process of furthering strengthening and deepening the regional integration movement remains a major foreign policy goal of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is for this reason and given the fact that our economic fortunes are inextricably linked, that Trinidad and Tobago continues to provide economic and humanitarian assistance to several CARICOM countries adversely affected by natural disasters.

Our further economic development and that of the global community as a whole, is dependent on the existence of global peace and security. In this regard, the Security Council has continued to take timely decisions on global crises in different parts of the globe, on terrorism and on nuclear non-proliferation.

The reform of that principal organ of the United Nations, charged with maintaining international peace and security, continues, however, to elude us. It is time to engage in bona fide negotiations on this matter. The

status quo is unacceptable. The Security Council must be reformed to reflect the current geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century and no longer the world as it was in the aftermath of World War II. New and important actors from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean are a part of today's global reality. An expanded and enhanced Security Council would provide the Council with even greater legitimacy and support in the carrying out of its Charter responsibilities. Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that much progress was made during the sixty-first session and the political momentum which was generated there should not be lost.

A reinvigorated Security Council is needed to address the major issues that continue to bedevil contemporary international relations. In the Middle East, the failure to move forward on the peace process has set back global efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The Palestinian people have yet to exercise their legitimate rights to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in an undivided homeland.

We call on the Quartet to resume the Road Map process for peace in the Middle East, so that the world can, in the foreseeable future, see two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, within internationally recognized and secure borders. Additionally, internationally acceptable solutions must be found to address the fate of the Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. All these matters have remained pending for far too long and the Palestinians should no longer be denied the realization of their statehood.

While there has been little or no progress in the matter of peace in the Middle East, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to note that, with respect to the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan, agreement has finally been reached, which has resulted in the deployment of a hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force for Darfur. We welcome this positive development. While we hope that the hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force will bring peace and stability to the region and enable humanitarian relief to flow once again to where it is most urgently required, all our efforts must now be turned towards putting a cease-fire in place and striving to have all the rebels groups fighting in Darfur move towards a peace arrangement with the Sudanese Government. Peace and justice are, however, inextricably linked and there can be no lasting peace in Darfur without accountability for the heinous crimes committed against the people of Darfur during the conflict.

While international political and security developments continue to pose major difficulties for the international community, developments in the area of international trade give rise to even greater concern. We are mindful of the reality that the steadfast efforts of Trinidad and Tobago, of the subregion and of other developing countries to confront effectively the challenges of globalization and liberalization would be rendered futile in the absence of a fair, transparent and equitable international economic trading system. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago therefore remains deeply concerned that, after many years of protracted negotiations characterized by many missed deadlines, the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations has yet to reach a compromise that would pave the way for an agreed outcome, particularly in the areas of agriculture and industrial products, and that incorporates the development dimension. We underscore the importance of ensuring that the principle of special and differential treatment is truly reflected throughout the negotiating modalities, and we call upon all parties in the negotiations to take fully into account the special needs of small and vulnerable economies.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago fully expects that the negotiations will resume in good faith and that there will be commensurate progress in agriculture, industrial products and all other areas of the negotiations, in keeping with the mandate of a single undertaking. That will ensure the successful conclusion of the Round and an outcome that fully reflects the commitment undertaken at Doha to put development at the heart of the multilateral trading system.

While those trade negotiations seem to have stalled and will require the injection of a high degree of political will to bring them to a successful conclusion, the international community is faced with yet another global concern in the form of climate change. As a result of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel use and land-use changes through deforestation, the world is already destined to an

increase of 1.14 degrees Celsius by the end of the next two decades.

There therefore needs to be a clearly defined global mitigation strategy that keeps the long-term temperature increase at less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Increases over 2 degrees Celsius are very likely to have an increased adverse impact on small island developing States, such as Trinidad and Tobago. In order to avoid a global climate disaster, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago calls for urgent and ambitious action by all States in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities and social and economic conditions.

As a State party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, we call on all States parties to UNFCCC, particularly major emitters of greenhouse gases, to agree at Bali to launch negotiations on a post-2012 regime. In those negotiations, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and other like-minded Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States will seek to achieve substantial and legally binding emission reductions in the shortest timeframe possible and significant increases in the level of resources available to developing countries, in particular small island developing States, to assist them in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change. To this end, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has already made a voluntary contribution of $1 million to the trust fund for the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre in Belize to strengthen that institution, so that it can assist CARICOM member States in implementing their adaptation strategies to deal with the adverse effects of climate change.

But we in the Caribbean are not only concerned about global warming and its adverse effects on Caribbean States. We are also deeply interested in preserving the marine environment of the Caribbean Sea, which is an important natural resource for all its littoral island and continental States, given their varying degrees of dependence on tourism. The passage through the Caribbean Sea of ships carrying radioactive waste is an issue to which all CARICOM Governments attach the highest importance. Allow me to take this opportunity to reiterate the continued objection of Caribbean countries against the use of the Caribbean Sea for the trans-shipment of radioactive waste. The repeated scientific and safety reports may offer some reassurance, but they do very little to appease our concern.

Our Prime Minister, Mr. Patrick Manning, in his 2008 budget statement, brought into sharp focus the vision of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for our cosmopolitan society. He emphasized that the mission in which we as a nation are engaged collectively is a transformation process aimed at bringing sustained prosperity and the requisite higher quality of life to every individual, family and community across the country. The Government has therefore sought to give concrete expression to the national quest for a highly competitive, productive, innovative and caring society, in which all are encouraged to attain their highest potential and are facilitated in doing so.

It is, accordingly, in this spirit that we have just signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted and opened for signature during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, and we will take steps to ratify the Convention once the necessary implementing legislation is put in place to complement what is already provided for in our domestic policy with regard to persons with disabilities.

It is this confidence in and respect for the international rule of law that has encouraged Trinidad and Tobago to campaign, since the late 1980s and at the highest political levels, for the establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC). We are keenly aware of the important strides being made by ICC, as it devotes its attention to the prosecution of individuals accused of committing the crimes within its jurisdiction, namely, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Trinidad and Tobago recalls in this connection the adoption at the Rome Diplomatic Conference of a resolution recommending that a conference to review the Court's Statute also consider the inclusion of trafficking in illegal drugs on an international scale as being within the Court's jurisdiction. We must seize the opportunity now forced upon us by international trends to fully engage ICC in efforts to stem the tide of that scourge, and similarly, to consider the inclusion of acts of terrorism, once that term is clearly defined by the international community.

Our approach will be grounded in the recognition of the continued deleterious effects that the international trade in illegal drugs is having on the social fabric of societies the world over, including in the Caribbean. The time has come for the international community to recognize the illicit trafficking of drugs as an international crime subject to the jurisdiction of ICC.

Another area of public international law to which Trinidad and Tobago attaches the utmost importance is the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This year's meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea addressed the important issue of marine genetic resources. Part XI of the Convention explicitly provides that the area beyond national jurisdiction and its resources are the common heritage of mankind. Trinidad and Tobago is accordingly of the view that any legal regime developed to regulate the marine genetic resources of the Area must be guided by the common heritage principle. Adherence to such a principle would ensure that the resources of the Area are exploited for the benefit of all members of the international community, and not just for the benefit of those with the financial wherewithal and the technical know-how.

Similarly, we recognize that all States parties to the Convention are ipso facto members of the International Seabed Authority. Despite the importance of the current work of the Authority on polymetallic sulphides and cobalt crusts, many States parties fail to attend the annual sessions of the Authority held in Jamaica. The continued absence of States undermines the common heritage principle laid down in Part XI of the Convention and threatens the very legitimacy of the work of the Authority. We accordingly call on all members of the Authority to attend regularly the sessions of the Authority and thus assist it in adopting regulations governing the exploration and exploitation of the mineral resources in the Area, which are of benefit to all mankind.

Trinidad and Tobago, like its Caribbean neighbours, acknowledges its maternal links to Africa and notes that 2007 was an important year for the peoples of that continent and for the African diaspora worldwide. Earlier this year, we observed here at Headquarters and in the capitals of all CARICOM States a programme of activities intended to raise the consciousness of peoples the world over regarding the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and the deleterious effects it had on Africa, depriving that continent of millions of its inhabitants, and on people of African descent in the Americas. We in Trinidad and Tobago have used the opportunity to educate all of our citizens on the degrading treatment to which those human beings were subjected and to demonstrate that, notwithstanding our history of slavery, followed by the indentureship of other segments of our population, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have developed a harmonious cosmopolitan society, which is an accomplishment worthy of emulation in other parts of the globe that are fractured by fratricidal ethnic and religious struggles.

In order for the suffering of millions of enslaved Africans not to have been in vain, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago intends to make a financial contribution to the CARICOM initiative for a permanent memorial to be erected within these hallowed walls of the United Nations in remembrance of all those who perished in the Middle Passage and on the plantations in the New World in their struggle for freedom and liberation from the yoke of slavery. We call upon the international community to contribute generously to such a worthwhile and historic venture.

In conclusion, the United Nations remains a centre for harmonizing the goals and aspirations of all mankind. There is no other universal forum with greater legitimacy or a more suitable mandate to bring about an improvement in the human condition. We must address all these global issues with firmness of purpose and in a resolute manner if we are to save coming generations from the adverse consequences of war, underdevelopment and poverty, as well as the deleterious effects of climate change, and to ensure that all humanity can enjoy improved standards of living in freedom and in dignity on a habitable planet.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joe Robert Pemagbi, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone): The Sierra Leone delegation would like to join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the work of the General Assembly at this session. We also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor for her contribution to the work of the Assembly, in particular for her initiatives in the ongoing process of the United Nations reform.

Allow me to convey to you, the Secretary-General and this Assembly greetings from the newly elected President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma, who took the oath of office just two weeks ago. President Koroma was not able to come to this debate because of time constraints.

Sierra Leone would like to reaffirm its commitment to the United Nations as the only international body that has the capacity to combat the multifarious problems of the world. The salvation of the world from conflict, natural disasters, diseases, hunger, poverty, oppression, abuse and violation of rights and the menace of climate change, and the achievement of our development goals will remain distant dreams without multilateral action. The stronger our United Nations, the greater our chances to realize the objectives for which we set it up. That is why Sierra Leone will never relent in its support for the reform process of the United Nations to enable it to respond appropriately to its numerous, diverse and ever-increasing challenges.

The reform exercise has scored some major successes, but the most critical and contentious reform — that of the Security Council — remains elusive. As long as the status quo is maintained, Africa will remain disadvantaged, as the only continent without a voice of permanent representation on the Council. We therefore urge a speedy consideration of the expansion of, and equitable representation on, the Council, to make it more representative, democratic and accountable and therefore more effective.

A new dawn has broken in the political landscape of Sierra Leone. Once again, Sierra Leone has demonstrated exemplary performance in the area of the consolidation of democracy and governance. We would like to acknowledge with humility the messages of commendation we received from various parts of the world for the conduct of the recent parliamentary and presidential elections. As one influential Western media organization put it, Sierra Leone is a pearl in the political crown of African politics.

My delegation welcomes the statement issued by the members of the Security Council in which they congratulated the people and institutions of Sierra Leone, in particular the National Electoral Commission and the Sierra Leone Police, on their conduct in the election period and the commitment they demonstrated to the democratic process. President Koroma has asked me to convey, on behalf of all Sierra Leoneans, sincere thanks to members of the international community for their invaluable contribution to the electoral process. We are grateful in particular for the logistical support that the various institutions concerned with the election received to enable them to perform their respective functions. As the new President said after taking the oath of office, the people of Sierra Leone must congratulate themselves for their historic resolve to ensure the victory of democracy and the free exercise of the will of the people.

No one can deny that, after a brutal civil war, Sierra Leone has enjoyed five years of relative peace. However, peace is not an event. It transcends the signing of ceasefire and peace agreements. It also transcends the successful disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants, and the official declaration of the end of armed conflict.

Peace is a process, a process that must be consolidated, maintained and sustained. Indeed, that is why the United Nations was established after two world wars: to promote social progress and better standards of life for the peoples of the world and to unite our strength in order to maintain international peace and security. The establishment of the new Peacebuilding Commission to facilitate post-conflict recovery is consistent with the objectives of the Organization. It adds to the true meaning and scope of the concept of peace.

The Sierra Leone Government considers the recent elections as part of the peace process. The people have once again exercised their constitutional right to choose the men and women they would like to serve the nation. Now we must not forget that the people also have a right to economic and social development. The right to vote is inextricably linked to the rights to food, clean and portable water, basic social services and, of course, development. All the praise, all the commendation that Sierra Leoneans have received in connection with the exercise of their political right, the right to vote, will be meaningless unless we create and intensify our collective efforts to ensure that they see and enjoy the dividends of that process.

Periodic elections are important, but they are not a panacea for all needs. Now that the elections are over, the Government is determined to meet the challenge of translating the exercise of a political right

into the realization of the economic and social rights of all Sierra Leoneans. There is indeed a change of Government, but that change needs urgent and substantial support to produce its desired dividends for the citizens. Accordingly, I would like to solicit the support of the United Nations, the entire international community and our bilateral partners to help us to deliver on the expectations linked to that change.

Sierra Leone will continue to have high expectations for the United Nations, including its Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund. Sierra Leone was selected as one of the first two countries on the Commission's agenda, and thus became eligible for funding, which has already had a positive impact on our ability to consolidate the peace. We thank the Commission and the Fund for that timely consideration. We note with appreciation, for instance, the timely support that the Sierra Leone Police received from the Peacebuilding Fund to enhance their capacity to manage public order during the recent elections.

The four priority areas that have been identified by the Government in consultation with the Commission, the United Nations system in Sierra Leone and other stakeholders, including civil society, are still valid. They are all equally important. However, in view of the inherent urgency and the critical nature of the youth problem, the Government will make sure, as far as possible, that youth employment and empowerment continue to be accorded first priority.

We hope that the details of the integrated peacebuilding strategy or framework for cooperation with Sierra Leone will soon be finalized. While recognizing the importance of partnership and accountability, we strongly believe that national ownership must be the core principle of the framework.

While Sierra Leoneans are being showered with commendations for the outcome of the elections, and deservedly so, and while the nation is today being held in high esteem in the area of political and constitutional order, we must not forget that the country still finds itself in the unenviable position of being ranked one of the least developed countries in the United Nations Development Programme's human development index. Unfortunately for Sierra Leone and the rest of the developing world, the prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015 remain cloudy and distant. My delegation shares the view that practical steps must be taken as a matter of urgency to accelerate the process of meeting the goals. We therefore welcome the recent launching of the MDG Africa Steering Group, chaired by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to mobilize the heads of the United Nations system and major multilateral and intergovernmental organizations in support of African States in their effort to meet the MDGs.

In principle, we support all initiatives that could at least get Africa on track. Those include Prime Minister Gordon Brown's MDG call to action of last July, and the declaration signed by a number of Heads of State and Government and private-sector leaders. We, for our part, acknowledge our responsibility to meet the Goals. However, we strongly believe that the developed countries should fulfil their commitments as partners in an interdependent world, with special support preference for countries emerging from conflict, in order to accelerate their progress towards meeting the goals.

Sierra Leone will continue to foster and maintain friendly relations with all Members States of the United Nations, in particular those in our immediate neighbourhood, members of the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). That is why, less than a week after assuming office, President Koroma paid a visit to the two other founding members of the Mano River Union, Liberia and Guinea, and to Burkina Faso, the current Chair of ECOWAS.

For far too long, the situation in some of our countries has been a threat to regional and international peace and security. Sierra Leone would like to assure this Assembly that it stands ready to reverse that trend in the subregion of West Africa, to help reduce tension, prevent armed conflict and strengthen institutions and machinery that have been created primarily to promote the economic and social well-being of people.

We will continue to work assiduously with the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and individual sovereign States to pursue the goals of peace and security enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, for Africa and the rest of the world.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

As we conclude the annual general debate, I would like to thank all participants for their insightful contributions. The presence of almost 100 heads of State or Government and approximately 80 Ministers for Foreign Affairs is a mark of the importance the world places on this unique Assembly.

Beyond the general debate, there has been a flurry of diplomatic activity, including many high-level events convened by the Secretary-General. We have increased our visibility and the public and media have responded positively. I am grateful that speakers directly addressed the five priority topics that I set out, and that they pointed the way forward. I am also grateful to those leaders who spared the time to discuss those priorities with me in more detail. With that mandate, I intend to work closely with all of you to achieve the results that your heads of delegation have called for.

The latest reports on the accelerated melting of the Arctic have unnerved the experts. We need to be on high alert. Responding to the challenge of climate change, we have sent a strong political message that the time for talk has passed and the time for action has begun. I believe an important shift has taken place. Climate change has become the flagship issue of the sixty-second session.

There was overwhelming consensus that, in adapting to global warming, we must not set limits to growth but rather help achieve sustainable development. We all agreed that we have common but differentiated responsibilities and there was, and rightly so, broad consensus that the United Nations must remain at the centre of the process to reach a global agreement, including to strengthen international environmental governance.

Many speakers also presented commendable initiatives: to reduce deforestation and emissions; to invest in flood prevention and food security; to introduce tougher energy efficiency standards; to mobilize private sector investment in clean technologies; to improve carbon-trading mechanisms; and to accelerate technology and resource transfers.

The idea of a road map to coordinate the United Nations system on climate change and to complement national efforts was endorsed by many. Given the urgency of the many calls for action, it is now up to Member States to deliver in Bali.

Overwhelming support to make quicker progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was expressed by leaders from all regions. Many of the Goals are off track, but in sub-Saharan Africa we may not achieve a single Goal by 2015. That is indeed an emergency situation.

Many developing countries set out domestic initiatives and new international partnerships to boost economic growth; to empower women and children; to provide better access to drugs to treat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. But many speakers also recognized that a gap remains between promises and delivery on aid, trade and domestic reforms. Achieving the MDGs requires a global partnership, with everyone fulfilling their part of the compact. I am therefore grateful that many participants supported convening an MDG leaders' meeting this session. We must demonstrate by our actions that we can and will achieve the Goals.

It was also evident that many delegations want to see further progress on financing for development as we move towards the 2008 Doha conference. Many also pointed out the significance of concluding a global deal on trade for reducing poverty. We must press ahead during the existing Round, as many agree the current system is not sustainable.

Terrorism in all forms was strongly condemned. There was strong support to ensure full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and a broad desire for swift progress on a convention. In that context, many also emphasized the need to overcome ignorance and prejudice through a sustained dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

On the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many reaffirmed the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights for all. While some addressed the shortcomings of the Human Rights Council, many also called for its strengthening in order that it might live up to its full potential.

In that context, reference was also made to the importance of adherence to international law, human security and the responsibility to protect, all of those being complementary to sustainable development, peace and security.

A wide range of issues regarding peace and security were raised. We have taken some small, but

concrete, steps in ongoing efforts towards sustainable political solutions in the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Darfur. Concerns were also expressed about recent events in Myanmar.

Positive developments were reported in a number of post-conflict countries. In that regard, some delegations noted the positive contribution that United Nations peacekeepers had made, while others stressed the need to strengthen the capacity of the Peacebuilding Commission.

There were calls for improved progress on disarmament, including concluding an arms trade treaty, and for advancing non-proliferation.

The idea of fairer migration policies was mentioned, and some raised the issue of growing links between organized crime, human trafficking and drugs.

There is overall agreement that we could make faster progress on all those issues, if our multilateral institutions better reflected contemporary realities, underlining the need for improved progress on United Nations reform.

The Secretariat must be more effective, efficient and accountable to Member States, and some speakers put forward initiatives to achieve this. Resources throughout the United Nations system must be mobilized and delivered more coherently on the ground.

We heard from countries engaged in and supporting the "One United Nations" approach that they are already seeing better results while others spoke in favour of strengthening the gender architecture.

There was wide-ranging support for concrete results on Security Council reform, including through intergovernmental negotiations.

The General Assembly is the only forum where we can tackle many of those issues comprehensively. It is therefore incumbent on us to revitalize this House by taking the necessary decisions on the priorities and challenges that have been outlined. At the opening of the general debate, I suggested that we could better achieve that goal if the General Assembly were more interactive. I am grateful that members delivered. Let us continue in this spirit tomorrow at the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Peace and throughout the sixty-second session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.